PETER'S LETTERS

TO

HIS KINSFOLK.

Serfojee Rajah. 1827

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THE THIRD EDITION.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

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LETTER XXVIII.

TO THE REV. DAVID WILLIAMS.

I HAVE already told you, that the Bar is the great focus from which the rays of interest and animation are diffused throughout the whole mass of society, in this northern capital. Compared with it, there is no object or congregation of objects, which can be said to have any wide and commanding grasp of the general attention. The Church—the University—even my own celebrated Faculty, in this its great seat of empire—all are no better than the "minora sidera,"

among which the luminaries of forensic authority and forensic reputation shine forth conspicuous and superior. Into whatever company the stranger may enter, he is sure, ere he has been half an hour in the place, to meet with something to remind him of the predominance of this great jurisprudential aristocracy. The names of the eminent leaders of the profession, pass through the lips of the ladies and gentlemen of Edinburgh, as frequently and as reverently as those of the great debaters of the House of Commons do through those of the ladies and gentlemen of London. In the absence of any other great centres of attraction, to dispute their preeminence in the general eye, the principal barristers are able to sustain and fix upon themselves, from month to month, and year to year, in this large and splendid city, something not unlike the same intensity of attention and admiration, which their brethren of the south may be too proud to command over the public mind of York or Lancaster, for two Assize-weeks in the year.

I think the profession makes a very tyrannical use of all these advantages. Not contented with being first, it is obvious they would fain be alone in the eye of admiration; and they seem to omit

garnish that texture of political, critical, and erotical common-places, which they share with the Masters and Misses of other cities, wherein the pretensions of the Gens Togata are kept somewhat more within the limits of propriety. My friend Wastle tells me, that, in the course of a love-correspondence, which once, by some unfortunate accident, got into general circulation in Edinburgh, among many other truly ludicrous exemplifications of the use of the legal style of courtship, there was one letter from the Strephon to the Phyllis, which began with "Madam—in answer to your duplies, received of date as per margin." But this, no doubt, is one of Wastle's pleasant exaggerations.

Although, however, the whole of the city, and the whole of its society, be more than enough redolent of the influence of this profession, it is by no means to be denied, that a very great share of influence is most justly due to the eminent services which its members have rendered, and are at the present time rendering to their country. It is not to be denied, that the Scottish lawyers have done more than any other class of their fellow-citizens, to keep alive the sorely threatened spirit of national independence in the thoughts and in the feelings of their country-

THE TAGORE ... ARHAL.

men. It is scarcely to be denied, that they have for a long time furnished, and are at this moment furnishing, the only example of high intellectual exertion, (beyond the case of mere individuals), in regard to which Scotland may challenge a comparison with the great sister-state, which has drawn so much of her intellect and her exertion into the overwhelming and obscuring vortex of her superiority. It is a right and a proper thing, then, that Scotland should be proud of her Bar—and, indeed, when one reflects for a moment, what an immense overshadowing proportion of all the great men she has produced have belonged, or at this moment do belong to this profession, it is quite impossible to be surprised or displeased, because so just a feeling may have been carried a little beyond the limit of mere propriety. It is not necessary to go back into the remote history of the Bar of Scotland, although, I believe, there is in all that history no one period devoid of its appropriate honours. One generation of illustrious men, connected with it throughout the whole, or throughout the greater part of their lives, has only just departed, and the memory of them and their exertions is yet fresh and unfaded. Others

have succeeded to their exertions and their honours, whom they that have seen both, admit to be well worthy of their predecessors. Indeed, it is not necessary to say one word more concerning the present state of the profession than this—that, in addition to many names which owe very great and splendid reputation to the Bar alone, the gown is worn at this moment by two persons, whom all the world must admit to have done more than all the rest of their contemporaries put together, for sustaining and extending the honours of the Scottish name—both at home and abroad. You need scarcely be told, that I speak of Mr Walter Scott and Mr Jeffrey. The former of these has, indeed, retired from the practice of the Bar; but he holds a high office in the Court of Session. The other is in the full tide of professional practice, and of a professional celebrity, which could scarcely be obscured by any thing less splendid, than the extra-professional reputation which has been yet longer associated with his name—and which, indeed, is obviously of a much higher, as well as of a much more enduring character, than any reputation which any profession, properly so called, ever can have the power to bestow.

The courts of justice with which all these eminent men are so closely connected, are placed in and about the same range of buildings, which in former times were set apart for the accommodation of the Parliament of Scotland. The main approach to these buildings lies through a small oblong square, which takes from this circumstance the name of "the Parliament Close." On two sides this Close is surrounded by houses of the same gigantic kind of elevation which I have already described to you, and in these, of old, were lodged a great proportion of the dignitaries and principal practitioners of the adjacent courts. At present, however, they are dedicated, like most of the houses in the same quarter of the city, to the accommodation of tradespeople, and the inferior persons attached to the Courts of Law. The western side of the quadrangle, is occupied in all its length by the Church of St Giles's, which in the later times of Scottish Episcopacy possessed the dignity of a Cathedral, and which, indeed, has been the scene of many of the most remarkable incidents in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland. In its general exterior, this church presents by no means a fine specimen of the Gothic Architecture, although there are several individual parts about

the structure which display great beauty—the tower above all which rises out of the centre of the pile, and is capped with a very rich and splendid canopy in the shape of a Crown Imperial. This beautiful tower and canopy form a fine point in almost every view of the city of Edinburgh; but the effect of the whole building, when one hears and thinks of it as a Cathedral, is a thing of no great significance. The neighbourhood of the Castle would indeed take something from the impression produced by the greatest Cathedral I am acquainted with, were it placed on the site of St Giles's; but nothing assuredly could have formed a finer accompaniment of softening and soothing interest to the haughty and imperious sway of that majectic fortress, than some large reposing mass of religious architecture, lifting itself as if under its protection out of the heart of the city which it commands. The only want, if want there be, in the whole aspect of this city, is, that of some such type of the grandeur of Religion rearing itself in the air, in somewhat of its due proportion of magnitude and magnificence. It is the only great city, the first impression of whose greatness is not blended with ideas suggested by the presence of some such edifice, piercing the sky in splendour or in gloom, far above

the frailer and lowlier habitations of those that come to worship beneath its roof. You remember those fine lines of Wordsworth, when, talking of the general external aspect of England, he says—

> "Not wanting at wide intervals the bulk
> Of ancient Minster, lifted above the clouds
> Of the dense air, which town or city breeds,
> To intercept the sun's glad beams."—

I know not, indeed, that any advantages, even of natural grandeur of situation or scenery, can entirely make up for the want of some such effect as the poet would describe, in the general view of any city set apart for the dwelling-place of Men, and of Christians. It seems to be the most natural and proper of all things, that from whatever side the traveller approaches to a Christian city, his eye should be invited, nay, commanded, to repose on some majestic monument of its Faith and its Devotion.—Every one, for example, that has ever sailed up the Thames—the only avenue that is worthy of LONDON—must recollect what a grand mixture of feelings arose within him, when—beyond forests of masts, and above one dark, impenetrable, and limitless ocean of smoke,—he saw for the first time the

holy dome of St Paul's, hung afar off, serene and golden among the clouds. What a calm radiance of sanctity and sublimity does that mighty temple appear to diffuse over the huge city, stretched out in endless pomp and endless darkness at its feet! How that one supreme presence sheds gracefulness and majesty over all that is done beneath its shadow!

There is a plan in agitation at present for erecting a splendid church in Edinburgh, as a great National Monument, in memory of the events of the late war, and already I find a large sum of money has been subscribed for carrying this plan into execution. I heartily wish it speedy and entire success. The sketch which I have seen of the intended edifice, appears to me to be one of the finest things that architectural genius has for many ages produced. In front, there is a portico, as grand as that of the Pantheon; behind this, a dome of most majestic height and dimension is lifted above a hall, around the exterior of which, tier above tier, and line within line of massy columns, are seen swelling or diminishing in endless variety of classical splendour. This hall is destined for the reception of statues and inscriptions, and it forms the entrance-way into a stately church, which shoots out from the side

opposite to the portico. Where it is proposed to place this fine edifice, I know not; but wherever it is placed, so it be placed at all, it cannot fail to add immeasurably to the effect of the finest situation, and the finest city in the world. But I have wandered widely from St Giles's and the Parliament Close.

The southern side of the square, and a small part of the eastern side, are filled with venerable Gothic buildings, which for many generations have been devoted to the accommodation of the Courts of Law, but which are now entirely shut out from the eye of the public, by a very ill-conceived and tasteless front-work of modern device, including a sufficient allowance of staring square windows, and Ionic pillars and pilasters. What beauty the front of the structure may have possessed in its original state, I have no means of ascertaining; but Mr Wastle sighs every time we pass through the *Close*, as pathetically as could be wished, over "the glory that hath departed." At all events, there can be no question, that the present frontispiece is every way detestable. It is heavy and clumsy in itself; and extremely ill chosen, moreover, whether one considers the character and appearance of the hall to which it gives access, or the aspect of

the cathedral, and the old buildings in immediate juxta-position without. Had it been resolved to remove entirely the seat of the Courts of Law, and provide for them more convenient and more extensive accommodation in some more modern part of the city, I am informed the money that has been thrown away within the last thirty years upon repairs and alterations, none of which have added any thing to the beauty or much to the convenience of the old Courts, would have been abundantly sufficient to cover the expense of building the new.

Right in front of the main entrance to the Courts as they stand, a fine equestrian statue of Charles II. enjoys a much more conspicuous situation than the merits of its original seem at all entitled to claim—more particularly from the people of Scotland. I think it rather unfortunate that this should be the only statue which salutes the public eye in the streets of Edinburgh. To say the truth, he is the only one of all our monarchs for whose character I think it impossible to feel one touch of sympathy or respect. Even his more unfortunate brother had honesty of principle, and something of the feelings of an Englishman. But why should the poor pensioned profligate, whose wit only rendered

THE TAYLORE

his vices more culpable, and whose good temper only rendered them more dangerous—why should he be selected for such a mark of distinguishing and hallowing remembrance as this? I should have been better pleased to see Scotland atoning by some such symbol of reverence for her sad offences against his father.

I shall conduct you into the interior of the Parliament-House in my next letter.

P. M.

LETTER XXIX.

TO THE SAME.

After passing through one or two dark and dungeon-like lobbies or anti-chambers, or by whatever more appropriate name they may be designated, one enters by a low pair of folding-doors into what is called the Outer House, wherein all civil cases are tried, in the first instance, by individual Judges, or Lord Ordinaries, before being submitted to the ultimate decision either of the whole Bench, or of one of its great Divisions. On being admitted, one sees a hall of very spacious dimensions, which, although not elegant in its finishing or decorations, has nevertheless an air of antique grandeur about it, that is altogether abundantly striking. The roof is very fine, being all of black oak, with the various arches of which it is composed resting one upon another, exactly as in Christ-Church Hall.

The area of this Hall is completely filled with law-practitioners, consisting of Solicitors and Advocates, who move in two different streams, along the respective places which immemorial custom has allotted to them on the floor. The crowd which is nearest the door, and in which I first found myself involved, is that of the Solicitors, Agents, Writers, or Men of Business, (for by all these names are they called). Here is a perfect whirl of eagerness and activity—every face alert, and sharpened into the acutest angles. Some I could see were darting about among the different Bars, where pleadings were going forward, like midshipmen in an engagement, furnishing powder to the combatants. They brought their great guns, the advocates, to bear sometimes upon one Judge and sometimes upon another; while each Judge might be discovered sitting calmly, like a fine piece of stone-work amidst the hiss of bombs and the roar of forty-pounders.

In the meantime, the "men of business," who were not immediately occupied in this way, paced rapidly along—each borne on his particular wave of this great tide of the affairs of men, but all having their faces well turned up above the crowd, and keeping a sharp look-out. This

was, I think, their general attitude. It reminded me of trouts bobbing near the surface of a stream, all equally sharp-set and anxious for a snap at whatever is going. Any staring or idle person must have appeared quite out of place amongst them, like a fixed point among Epicurus's concourse of atoms; and indeed I think, after I began to collect myself a little, I could easily observe that I myself, standing firm in the midst of the hubbub, with my arms folded *ut mos est,* attracted some notice from a few of those that were hurrying past me, to and fro, and ever and anon. Whether I looked like a client either in *esse* or in *posse*, I know not, but

> ———" Some fell to such perusal of my face,
> As they would draw me;"

while I, in the meantime, could begin to discover here and there a few persons of more quiescent demeanour, who looked like some of those unfortunates, at whose expense this superb scene of motion is maintained and kept in action. Money may be compared to a momentum or impetus, of which one body loses as much as it imparts to another. The client, after having transferred a certain impetus to his agent, loses part of his alacrity, and is apt to stand still in the

Parliament-House, with a rather disconsolate air; while he sees his agent (consolatory spectacle!) inspired with the momentum of which he himself is divested, and spinning about in every sort of curve, ellipsis, and parabola. The anxious gaze with which these individuals seemed to be contemplating the toss and tumult around them, formed a sufficient distinction between them and the cool, unconcerned, calmly perspicacious Dr Morris. It was evident, that they could not at all enter, with any delight kindred to mine, into the sentiment of the luxurious Epicurean,

> "Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,
> E tuto alterius magnum spectare laborem."

Such of these litigants, again, as had come from the country, could be easily pointed out from among the other clients. Here and there I noticed a far-travelled Gaffer, conspicuous for his farmer's coat of grey, or lightest cærulean tincture—his staff in his ungloved horny fingers—and his clouted shoon, or tall, straight, discoloured pair of top-boots, walking about without reflecting,—to judge from his aspect,—that the persons by whom he was surrounded had mouths which

would make very little of demolishing a litigious farmer, with his whole stock and plenishing, and leaving no more vestige of him than remained of Actæon, after he fell in with those very instruments which he himself had been wont to employ in the chase. He need only look about him, and see the whole pack. Here are,

> "Pamphagus et Dorceus et Oribasus; Arcades omnes;
> Nebrophonosque valens et trux cum Lælape Theron,
> Et pedibus Pterelas et naribus utilis Agre,
> Hylæusque fero nuper percussus ab apro,
> Deque lupo concepta Nape, pecudesque secuta
> Pœmenis, et natis comitata Harpya duobus,
> Et substricta gerens Sicyonius ilia Ladon;
> Et niveis Leucon, et villis Asbolus atris,
> Et patre Dictæo sed matre Laconide nati,
> Labros et Agriodos, et acutæ vocis Hylactor,
> Quosque referre mora est."

If he had once fairly got into difficulties, and "a poinding" had gone out against him, the following would also apply:

> "Ille fugit per quæ fuerat loca sæpe secutus
> Heu! famulos fugit ipse suos. Clamare libebat
> Actæon ego sum: Dominum cognoscite vestrum.
> Verba animo desunt: resonat latratibus æther."

Neither Pamphagus, nor Labros, nor Ladon of the "substricta ilia," nor Leucon with the white

wig, nor Asbolus with the black hair, nor the swift feet of Pterelas, nor the keen nostrils of Agre, nor the sharp bark of Hylactor, will relax into quiescence at his bidding, whose *petitions* had so often been sufficient to set all their energies in motion. How little will the memory of all his fees avail? how cruelly must he feel their fangs, whose snarling threats and tearing onset had afforded to himself so much matter of gratulation and applause, when some other was the victim!

Contrasted with the elder and maturer "men of business," who are generally attired in sober hues, the rising generation of Dandy-Clerks make a very shining appearance.—The dust of a process newly wakened from its sleep of lustrums is a sad thing on a snow-white pair of breeches; but it is amazing how clean and brilliant these young gentlemen contrive to look, and they deserve the utmost credit for it; for besides the venerable powder of resuscitated papers and documents, no trifling quantity of dust must be brought into the Parliament-House by the shoes of the multitude resorting thither, and kept flying about by the stir of their tumultuous parade. They are really the finest beaux I have

seen in this city, or so at least they appeared to be, under the favourable circumstances of contrast in which I saw them. Their bright olive surtouts, with glossy collars of velvet—their smart green riding jackets—their waistcoats beaming in all the diversified dazzle of stripe and spot—their neckcloths *à la Waterloo*, or *à la Belcher*—all these rainbows of glory could not fail to charm the eye with a delightful sense of splendour, among such an immense hazy atmosphere of rusty black broad-cloth, and tattered bombazeens. The military swagger affected by some of these spruce scribes, and the ferocious audacity with which they seemed to be hurling their bunches of briefs from one desk to another, formed an equally striking contrast to the staid and measured step of the meditating pale-faced counsellors up to the ears in occupation on the one side,—and the careless pococurante lounge of their less busy juniors on the other. What a fine subject all this might have been for poor Bunbury! I wonder what made your friend Rose say,

> " Your Dandy's at a discount out of London."

The Advocates, in the midst of their peripateticism, receive their fair proportion of all the dust

that is flying, and thus, perhaps, some young men of their body may have an opportunity of acquiring a fine sober brown, to which their complexions might not have been very likely to attain through the medium of hard study. Upon the whole, they are a well-thriven looking race of juvenile jurisconsults; but I certainly could not see many heads among them which Dr Spurzheim would think of setting down as belonging to so many future Voets and Pothiers. For the most part, however, they are at least so candid as to wear their own hair, and so to afford the initiated a fair opportunity of inspecting their various conformations of cranium. A few, indeed, bury all beauties and defects in that old bird's-nest of horse-hair and pomatum, which is in this place usually adhered to by the seniors alone; for you must know the costume of the Scottish Bar is far from being regulated in the same uniform manner with that of Westminster-Hall; and those advocates, who hold no official situation under the crown, are at liberty to pace the floor of the Parliament-House with or without wigs, exactly as it may please their fancy. I confess I should think it were better, either that all had wigs, or that all wanted them; for at

present the mixture of bushy heads of hair *à la Berlin*, or *à la Cossack*, with stiff rows of curls, toupees, and three tails, presents a broken and pyebald sort of aspect, to which my southern optics cannot easily reconcile themselves. Perhaps it were best to re-instate the wig in its full rights, and make it a *sine qua non* in the wardrobe of every counsellor; for if it be fairly allowed to disappear, the gown will probably follow; and in process of time, we may see the very Judges, like those Mr Fearon saw in Connecticut, giving decisions in loose great coats, and black silk neckcloths.

Another circumstance that offended me in the appearance of the barristers, is their total want of rule in regard to their nether integuments. I, that have been a Pro-proctor in my day, cannot away with boots, trowsers, and gaiters, worn under a gown. I think a gown implies *dress*, and that the advocates should wear nothing but black breeches and stockings when in court, as is the case in the south. These are very small matters; but it is astonishing how much effect such small matters produce in the general appearance of a Court of Justice—where, indeed, above all places in the world, propriety of appearance, in regard

even to the most minute things, should always be studiously considered.

Ever your's,

P. M.

LETTER XXX.

TO THE SAME.

By degrees I won my way through several different currents of the crowd, and established myself with my back to the wall, full in the centre of the Advocates' side of the house. Here I could find leisure and opportunity to study the minutiæ of the whole scene, and in particular to "fill in my foreground," as the painter's phrase runs, much more accurately than when I was myself mingled in the central tumult of the place. My position resembled that of a person visiting a peristrephic panorama, who, himself immoveable in a darksome corner, beholds the whole dust and glare of some fiery battle pass, cloud upon cloud, and flash upon flash, before his eyes. Here might be seen some of the "Magnanimi Heroes," cleaving into the mass,

like furious wedges, in order to reach their appointed station—and traced in their ulterior progress only by the casual glimpses of "the proud horse-hair nodding on the crest"—while others, equally determined and keen ἐνι προμαχοισι μαχεσθαι, from their stature and agility, might be more properly compared to so many shuttles driven through the threads of an intricate web by some nimble-jointed weaver, Μικροι μεν ἀλλα Μαχηται. On one side might be observed some first-rate champion, pausing for a moment with a grin of bloody relaxation, to breathe after one ferocious and triumphant charge—his plump Sancho Panza busily arranging his harness for the next, no less ferocious. On another sits some less successful combatant, all his features screwed and twisted together, smarting under the lash of a sarcasm—or gazing blankly about him, imperfectly recovered from the stun of a retort; while perhaps some young beardless Esquire, burning for his spurs, may be discovered eyeing both of these askance, envious even of the cuts of the vanquished, and anxious, at all hazards, like Uriah the Hittite, that some letter might reach the directors of the fray, saying, "Set ye this man in the front of the battle."

The elder and more employed advocates, to have done with my similitudes, seemed for the

most part, when not actually engaged in pleading, to have the habit of seating themselves on the benches, which extend along the whole rear of their station. Here the veteran might be seen either poring over the materials of some future discussion, or contesting bitterly with some brother veteran the propriety of some late decision, or perhaps listening with sweet smiles to the talk of some uncovered Agent, whose hand in his fob seemed to give promise of a coming fee. The most of the younger ones seemed either to promenade with an air of utter *nonchalance*, or to collect into groupes of four, five, or six, from whence the loud and husky cackle of some leading characters might be heard ever and anon rising triumphantly above the usual hum of the place. I could soon discover, that there are some half-dozen, perhaps, of professed wits and story-tellers, the droppings of whose inspiration are sufficient to attract round each of them, when he sets himself on his legs in the middle of the floor, a proper allowance of eyes and mouths to glisten and gape over the morning's budget of good things—some new eccentricity of Lord H——, or broad bon-mot of Mr C——. The side of the hall frequented by these worthies, is heated by two or three large iron-stoves;

and from the custom of lounging during the winter-months in the immediate vicinity of these centres of comfort, the barristers of facetious disposition have been christened by one of their brethren, the "wits of the Stove-school." But, indeed, for aught I see, the journeyman days of the whole of the young Scotch advocates might, with great propriety, be called by the simple collective,—*Stove-hood.*

What has a more striking effect, however, than even the glee and merriment of these young people close at hand, is the sound of pleaders pleading at a distance, the music of whose elocution, heard separate from its meaning, is not, for the most part, such as to tempt a nearer approach. At one Bar, the wig of the Judge is seen scarcely over-topping the mass of eager, bent-forward, listening admirers, assembled to do honour to some favourite speaker of the day —their faces already arrayed in an appropriate smile, wherewith to welcome the expected joke —or fixed in the attitude of discernment and penetration, as if resolved that no link of his cunning chain of ratiocination should escape their scrutiny. At another extremity, the whole paraphernalia of the Judge's attire are exposed full to vision—all the benches around his tribu-

nal deserted and tenantless, while some wearisome proser, to whom nobody listens except from necessity, is seen thumping the Bar before him in all the agonies of unpartaken earnestness, his hoarse clamorous voice floating desolately into thin air, "like the voice of a man crying in the wilderness—whom no man heareth."

The appearance of the Judges, or Lords Ordinaries, themselves, next attracted my attention, and I walked round the Hall to survey them, each in rotation, at his particular Bar. Their dress is quite different from what we are accustomed to in our civil courts in England, and bears much more resemblance to what I have seen in the portraits of the old Presidents of the French Parliaments. Indeed I believe it is not widely different from this; for the Court of Session was originally formed upon the model of the Parliament of Paris, and its costume was borrowed from that illustrious court, as well as its constitution. The Judges have wigs somewhat different from those of the Advocates, and larger in dimension; but their gowns are very splendid things, being composed of purple velvet and blue cloth and silk, with a great variety of knots and ornaments of all kinds. I could not see this vestment without much respect, when I re-

flected on the great number of men celebrated both for greatness and goodness that have worn it. It is the same gown in which the venerable Duncan Forbes of Culloden delivered judgment—in which Kaimes, and Hailes, and Braxfield, and Monboddo, and Woodhouselee—and later, perhaps greater than all, in which Blair was clothed. It struck me, that the Judges in the Outer Court were rather younger men than we commonly see on the Bench in an English Court of Law; but their physiognomies, and the manner in which they seemed to be listening to the pleaders before them, were in general quite as I could have wished to see them. At one end sat Lord Gillies, brother to the excellent Historian of Greece, and Translator of Aristotle's Rhetoric and Ethics. He has at first sight an air of laziness about him, and seems as if he grudged the labour of lifting up his eyes to view the countenance of the person addressing him. But every now and then, he muttered some short question or remark, which showed abundantly that his intellect was awake to all the intricacies of the case; and I could see, that when the Advocates were done, he had no difficulty in separating the essence of the plea from all the adventitious

matter with which their briefs had instructed them to clog and embarrass it. He has a countenance very expressive of acumen, and a pair of the finest black eyes I ever saw, although he commonly keeps them half-shrouded under their lids—and I have no doubt, from the mode in which he delivered himself, that he must have been a most accomplished debater when at the Bar. At the other extremity, the greatest stream of business seemed to rush in the direction of Lord Pitmilly's tribunal. This Judge has the most delightful expression of suavity and patience in his look and manner, that I ever saw in any Judge, unless it be our own venerable old Chancellor Eldon. The calm conscientious way in which he seemed to listen to every thing that was said, the mild good-tempered smile with which he showed every now and then that he was not to be deceived by any subtilty or quirk, and the clear and distinct manner in which he explained the grounds of his decision, left me at no loss to account for the extraordinary pressure of business with which this excellent Judge appeared to be surrounded. Before these two Lords it was, that all the principal causes of the morning appeared to be argued.

I happened to be standing close beside Lord Pitmilly's Bar, when a pleading was going on for aliment of a natural child, at the instance of a servant-wench against an Irish student, who had come to Edinburgh to attend the medical classes. The native of the Emerald Isle was personally present in rear of his counsel, arrayed in a tarnished green great-coat, and muttering bitterly in his national accent. I heard him say to one near him, that he had been prevented from getting out of the way in proper time, by the harsh procedure of a grocer in Drummond-street, whose account was unpaid, and who had detained him by what he called a "meditatione fugæ warrant." The poor girl's case was set forth with great breadth of colouring and verity of detail by Mr Clerk, (a fine sagacious-looking old gentleman, of whom I shall speak anon,) and the Bar was speedily surrounded by close ranks of listeners. Mr Jeffrey, who was of counsel for the son of Erin, observed that the exceeding rapidity with which the crowd clustered itself around did not escape my attention, and whispered to me, that cases of this kind are always honoured with an especial allowance of such honour—being regarded as elegant *nugæ*, or taste-

ful relaxations from the drier routine of ordinary practice—somewhat like snatches of the Belles-Lettres in the midst of a course of hard reading. I could perceive, that even the grimmest and most morose-looking *Men of Business* would, in passing, endeavour to wedge their noses into the crowd, and after catching a few words of the pleading, would turn away grinning like satyrs, with the relish of what they had heard still mantling in their opaque imaginations. Jeffrey also told me, that Irish cases of the sort above-mentioned are extremely frequent even in the Scottish courts; and, indeed, the great Philips himself seems never to enjoy the full command and swing of his powers, unless on the subject of a seduction; so that it may be said with truth of this wonderful man, and the gallant nation to which he belongs, that they mutually stand in much need of each other.

"'Tis well that they should sin, so he may shine."

P. M.

LETTER XXXI.

TO THE SAME.

DEAR WILLIAMS,

THE walls of this Outer House are in general quite bare; for the few old portraits hung here and there, are insufficient to produce any impression in the general view; but the Hall has lately received one very important ornament—namely, a statue of the late Lord Melville by Chantry, which has been placed on a pedestal of considerable elevation in the centre of the floor. As a piece of art, I cannot say that I consider this statue as at all equal to some others by the same masterly hand, which I have seen elsewhere. I am aware, however, that it is seen to very little advantage in the situation where it is placed; and, moreover, that no statue can be seen to its utmost advantage, when it is quite new from the chisel of the sculptor. It requires some time before the marble can be made to re-

concile itself with the atmosphere around it; and while the surface continues to offend the eye by its first cold glare of chalky whiteness, it is not quite easy for an ordinary connoisseur to form a proper idea of the lines and forms set forth in this unharmonious material. Making allowance for all this, however, I can scarcely bring myself to imagine, that the statue of Melville will ever be thought to do honour to the genius of Chantry. There is some skill displayed in the management of the Viscount's robes; and in the face itself, there is a very considerable likeness to Lord Melville—which is enough, as your recollection must well assure you, to save it from any want of expressiveness. But the effect of the whole is, I think, very trivial, compared with what such an artist might have been expected to produce, when he had so fine a subject as Dundas to stimulate his energies. It is not often now-a-days, that an artist can hope to meet with such a union of intellectual and corporeal grandeur, as were joined together in this Friend and Brother of William Pitt.

This statue has been erected entirely at the expence of the gentlemen of the Scottish Bar, and it is impossible not to admire and honour the

feelings, which called forth from them such a magnificent mark of respect for the memory of their illustrious Brother. Lord Melville walked the boards of the Parliament House during no less than twenty years, before he began to reside constantly in London as Treasurer of the Navy; and during the whole of this period, his happy temper and manners, and friendly open-hearted disposition, rendered him a universal favourite among all that followed the same course of life. By all true Scotchmen, indeed, of whatever party in church or state, Melville was always regarded with an eye of kindliness and partiality. Whig and Tory agreed in loving him; and how could it be otherwise, for although nobody surely could be more firm in his political principles than he himself was, he allowed no feelings, arising out of these principles, to affect his behaviour in the intercourse of common life. He was always happy to drink his bottle of port with any worthy man of any party; and he was always happy to oblige personally those, in common with whom he had any recollections of good-humoured festivity. But the great source of his popularity was unquestionably nothing more than his intimate and most familiar acquaintance with the actual state of Scotland, and its inhabitants, and

all their affairs. Here in Edinburgh, unless Mr Wastle exaggerates very much, there was no person of any consideration, whose whole connections and concerns were not perfectly well known to him. And I already begin to see enough of the structure of Scottish society, to appreciate somewhat of the advantages which this knowledge must have placed in the hands of so accomplished a statesman. The services which he had rendered to this part of the island were acknowledged by the greater part of those who by no means approved of the general system of policy in which he had so great a share; and among the subscribers to his statue were very many, whose names no solicitation could have brought to appear under any similar proposals with regard to any other Tory in the world.*

* As one little trait, illustrative of Lord Melville's manner of conducting himself to the people of Scotland, I may mention, that to the latest period of his life, whenever he came to Edinburgh, he made a point of calling in person on all the old ladies with whom he had been acquainted in the days of his youth. He might be seen going about, and climbing up to the most aërial *habitacula* of ancient maidens and widows; and it is probable he gained more by this, than he could have gained by almost any other thing, even in the good opinion of people who might themselves be vainly desirous of having an interview with the great statesman.

In the two Inner Houses, as they are called, (where causes are ultimately decided by the two great Divisions of the Court,) are placed statues of two of the most eminent persons that have ever presided over the administration of justice in Scotland. In the hall of the Second Division, behind the chair of the Lord Justice Clerk, who presides on that bench, is placed the statue of Duncan Forbes of Culloden; and in a similar situation, in the First Division, that of the Lord President Blair, who died only a few years ago. The statue of Culloden is by Roubilliac, and executed quite in his usual style as to its detail; but the earnest attitude of the Judge, stooping forward and extending his right hand, and the noble character of his physiognomy, are sufficient to redeem many of those defects which all must perceive. The other statue—that of Blair, is another work of Chantry, and, I think, a vastly superior one to the Melville. The drapery, indeed, is very faulty—it is narrow and scanty, and appears to cling to the limbs like the wet tunic of the Venus Anadyomene. But nothing can be grander than the attitude and whole air of the figure. The Judge is not represented as leaning forward, and speaking with eagerness like Forbes, but as bending his head towards the

ground, and folded in the utmost depth of quiet meditation; and this, I think, shews the conception of a much greater artist than the Frenchman. The head itself is one of the most superb things that either Nature or Art has produced in modern times. The forehead is totally bald, and shaped in a most heroic style of beauty—the nose springs from its arch with the firmness and breadth of a genuine antique—the lips are drawn together and compressed in a way that gives the idea of intensest abstraction—and the whole head is such, that it might almost be placed upon the bust of the Theseus, without offence to the majesty of that inimitable torso. The most wonderful circumstance is, that, unless all my friends be deceived, the statue, in all these points, is a most faithful copy of the original. Nor, to judge from the style in which the memory of the man is spoken of by all with whom I have conversed on the subject of his merits, am I inclined to doubt that it may have been so. He died very suddenly, and in the same week with Lord Melville, who had been through life his most dear and intimate friend; and the sensation produced all over Scotland by this two-fold calamity, is represented to have been one of the most impressive and awful things in the world.

In regard to the best interests of the Scottish nation, perhaps the Judge might be even a greater loss than the Statesman; for there seems to be no reason to doubt, that he was cut off not far from the commencement of a judicial career, which, if it had been continued through such a space of time as the ordinary course of nature might have promised, would have done more for perfecting the structure of the Civil Jurisprudence of Scotland, than is likely to be accomplished under many successive generations of less extraordinary men. It would appear as if the whole of his clear and commanding intellect had been framed and tempered in such a way, as to qualify him peculiarly and expressly for being what the Stagyrite has finely called "a living Equity"—one of the happiest, and perhaps one of the rarest, of all the combinations of mental powers. By all men of all parties, the merits of this great man also were alike acknowledged, and his memory is at this moment alike had in reverence by them all. Even the keenest of his now surviving political opponents, himself one of the greatest lawyers that Scotland ever has produced, is said to have contemplated the supreme intellect of Blair with a feeling of respectfulness not much akin to the common cast

of his disposition. After hearing the President overturn, without an effort, in the course of a few clear and short sentences, a whole mass of ingenious sophistry, which it had cost himself much labour to erect, and which appeared to be regarded as insurmountable by all the rest of his audience, this great Barrister is said to have sat for a few seconds, ruminating with much bitterness on the discomfiture of his cause, and then to have muttered between his teeth, "My man! God Almighty spared nae pains when he made your brains." Those that have seen Mr Clerk, and know his peculiarities, appreciate the value of this compliment, and do not think the less of it because of its coarseness.

LETTER XXXII.

TO THE SAME.

I BELIEVE I repeated to you, at the close of my last letter, a remark of Mr Clerk concerning the President Blair. This Mr Clerk is unquestionably, at the present time, the greatest man among those who derive their chief fame from their appearances at the Scottish Bar. His face and figure attracted my particular attention, before I had the least knowledge of his name, or suspicion of his surpassing celebrity. He has, by some accident in infancy, been made lame in one of his limbs; but he has notwithstanding every appearance of great bodily vigour and activity.

I remember your instructions concerning the Barristers of Scotland, and after having visited their Courts with great assiduity, during the greater part of my stay in this place, shall now proceed to draw you portraits of the most emi-

nent, as nearly as I can hit it, in the style you wish me to employ. I must begin with Mr Clerk, for, by the unanimous consent of his brethren, and indeed of the whole of the profession, he is the present Coryphæus of the Bar—*Juris consultorum sui seculi facile princeps.* Others there are that surpass him in a few particular points, both of learning and of practice; but, on the whole, his superiority is entirely unrivalled and undisputed. Those who approach the nearest to him, are indeed so much his juniors, that he cannot fail to have an immense ascendency over them, both from the actual advantages of his longer study and experience, and, without offence to him or them be it added, from the effects of their early admiration of him, while he was as yet far above their sphere. Do not suppose, however, that I mean to represent any part of the respect with which these gentlemen treat their senior, as the result of empty prejudice. Never was any man less of a quack than Mr Clerk; the very essence of his character is scorn of ornament, and utter loathing of affectation. He is the plainest, the shrewdest, and the most sarcastic of men; his sceptre owes the whole of its power to its weight—nothing to glitter.

It is impossible to imagine a physiognomy

M^r. CLERK.

more expressive of the character of a great lawyer and barrister. The features are in themselves good—at least a painter would call them so; and the upper part of the profile has as fine lines as could be wished. But then, how the habits of the mind have stamped their traces on every part of the face! What sharpness, what razor-like sharpness, has indented itself about the wrinkles of his eye-lids; the eyes themselves so quick, so gray, such bafflers of scrutiny, such exquisite scrutinizers, how they change their expression—it seems almost how they change their colour—shifting from contracted, concentrated blackness, through every shade of brown, blue, green, and hazel, back into their own open, gleaming gray again! How they glisten into a smile of disdain!—Aristotle says, that all laughter springs from emotions of conscious superiority.—I never saw the Stagyrite so well illustrated, as in the smile of this gentleman. He seems to be affected with the most delightful and balmy feelings, by the contemplation of some soft-headed, prosing driveller, racking his poor brain, or bellowing his lungs out—all about something which he, the smiler, sees through so thoroughly, so distinctly. Blunder follows blunder; the mist thickens about the brain of the bewildered hammerer; and every plunge of the bog-trotter—

every deepening shade of his confusion—is attested by some more copious infusion of Sardonic suavity, into the horrible, ghastly, grinning smile of the happy Mr Clerk. How he chuckles over the solemn *spoon* whom he hath fairly got into his power! When he rises, at the conclusion of his display, he seems to collect himself like a kite above a covey of partridges; he is in no hurry to come down, but holds his victims "with his glittering eye," and smiles sweetly, and yet more sweetly, the bitter assurance of their coming fate; then out he stretches his arm, as the kite may his wing, and changing the smile by degrees into a frown, and drawing down his eye-brows from their altitude among the wrinkles of his forehead, and making them to hang like fringes quite over his diminishing and brightening eyes, and mingling a tincture of deeper scorn in the wave of his lips, and projecting his chin, and suffusing his whole face with the very livery of wrath, how he pounces with a scream upon his prey—and, may the Lord have mercy upon their unhappy souls!——

He is so sure of himself, and he has the happy knack of seeming to be so sure of his case, that the least appearance of labour, or concern, or nicety of arrangement, or accuracy of expression, would take away from the imposing effect of his

cool, careless, scornful, and determined negligence. Even the greatest of his opponents sit as it were rebuked before his gaze of intolerable derision. But careless and scornful as he is, what a display of skilfulness in the way of putting his statements; what command of intellect in the strength with which he deals the irresistible blows of his arguments—blows of all kinds, *fibbers, cross-buttockers,* but most often and most delightedly sheer *facers—choppers.*—"*Ars est celare artem,*" is his motto; or rather, "*Usus ipse natura est;*" for where was there ever such an instance of the certain sway of tact and experience? It is truly a delightful thing, to be a witness of this mighty intellectual gladiator, scattering every thing before him, like a king, upon his old accustomed arena; with an eye swift as lightning to discover the unguarded point of his adversary, and a hand steady as iron to direct his weapon, and a mask of impenetrable stuff, that throws back, like a rock, the prying gaze that would dare to retaliate upon his own lynx-like penetration—what a champion is here! It is no wonder that every litigant in this covenanting land, should have learned to look on it as a mere tempting of Providence to omit retaining John Clerk.

As might be expected from a man of his stand-

ing in years and in talent, this great advocate disdains to speak any other than the language of his own country. I am not sure, indeed, but there may be some little tinge of affectation in this pertinacious adherence to both the words and the music of his Doric dialect. However, as he has perfectly the appearance and manners of a gentleman, and even, every now and then, (*when it so likes him*), something of the air of the courtier about him,—there is an impression quite the reverse of vulgarity produced by the mode of his speaking; and, in this respect, he is certainly quite in a different situation from some of his younger brethren, who have not the excuse of age for the breadth of their utterance, nor, what is perhaps of greater importance, the same truly antique style in its breadth. Of this, indeed, I could not pretend to be a judge; but some of my friends assured me, that nothing could be more marked than the difference between the Scotch of those who learned it sixty years ago, and that of this younger generation. These last, they observed, have few opportunities of hearing Scotch spoken, but among servants, &c. so that there clings to all their own expressions, when they make use of the neglected dialect, a rich flavour of the hall, or the stable. Now, Mr Clerk, who is a man of excellent family and

THE TAYLORE M... ...HAL

fashion, spent all his early years among ladies and gentlemen, who spoke nothing whatever but Scotch; and even I could observe (or so, at least, I persuaded myself,) that his language had a certain cast of elegance, even in the utmost breadth. But the truth is, that the matter of his orations is far too good to allow of much attention being paid to its manner; and after a little time I scarcely remarked that he was speaking a dialect different from my own, excepting when, screwing his features into their utmost bitterness, or else relaxing them into their broadest glee, he launched forth some mysterious vernacularism of wrath or merriment, to the tenfold confusion or tenfold delight of those for whose use it was intended.

I had almost forgotten to mention, that this ancient barrister, who at the Bar has so much the air of having never thought of anything but his profession, is, in fact, quite the reverse of a mere lawyer. Like old Voet, who used to be so much laughed at by the Leyden jurisconsults for his frequenting the town-hall in that city, (where there is, it seems, a very curious collection of paintings), Mr Clerk is a great connoisseur in pictures, and devotes to them a very considerable portion of his time. He is not a mere

connoisseur, however, and, indeed, I suspect, carries as much true knowledge of the art in his little finger, as the whole reporting committee of the Dilettanti Society of Edinburgh do in their heads. The truth is, that he is himself a capital artist, and had he given himself entirely to the art he loves so well, would have been, I have little doubt, by far the greatest master Scotland ever has produced. I went one day, by mere accident, into my friend John Ballantyne's Sale-room, at the moment when that most cunning of all tempters had in his hand a little pen and ink sketch by Mr Clerk, drawn upon the outer page of a reclaiming petition—probably while some stupid opponent supposed himself to be uttering things highly worthy of Mr Clerk's undivided attention. I bought the scrap for a mere trifle; but I assure you I value it very highly. I have shown it to Mrs ——, and Tom ——, and several others of my friends, and they all agree it is quite a *bijou*. The subject is Bathsheba, with her foot in the water. The David is inimitable. Mr Clerk is a mighty patron of artists, and has a splendid gallery of pictures in his own possession. But of it I shall perhaps have another opportunity of speaking. His rage for collecting, however, is by no means confined to pictures. He has a stock of dogs, that would serve to keep

the whole population of a Mahometan city in disgust, and a perfect menagerie of the genus felinum. If one goes to consult him in his own chambers, I am told he is usually to be found sitting with a huge black Tom cat on his shoulder, (like the black Poodle of Albertus Magnus), and surrounded in every direction with familiars of the same species, but of lesser dimensions—

——" Spirits, black, white, and grey."

The great Tom, however, is the pet *par excellence;* and, I am told, Mr Clerk maintains a milch-cow exclusively or nominally for his use. Truly such a sanctuary, with such accompaniments, might, I think, form a subject not unworthy of his own masterly pencil.

Upon the whole, this gentleman at this moment holds a place in the public estimation, little if any thing inferior to the most celebrated men his country possesses even in this its age of wonders. That such eminence should be attained by a person of this profession in a country situated as Scotland is, forms at once a very high compliment to the profession itself, and the most unequivocal proof of the masterly and commanding power of the man's intellect. If I have

ever seen any countenance which I should consider as the infallible index of originality and genius—such is the countenance of Mr Clerk; and everything he says and does is in perfect harmony with its language.

LETTER XXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

THERE cannot be a greater contrast between any two individuals of eminent acquirements, than there is between Mr Clerk and the gentleman who ranks next to him at the Scottish Bar —Mr Cranstoun. They mutually set off each other to great advantage; they are rivals in nothing. Notwithstanding their total dissimilitude in almost every respect, they are well nigh equally admired by every one. I am much mistaken if anything could furnish a more unequivocal testimony to the talents of them both.

It was my fortune to see Mr Cranstoun for the first time, as he rose to make his reply to a fervid, masculine, homely harangue of my old favourite; and I was never less disposed to receive favourably the claims of a stranger upon my admiration. There was something, however, about

the new speaker which would not permit me to refuse him my attention; although, I confess, I could scarcely bring myself to listen to him with much *gusto* for several minutes. I felt, to use a simile in Mr Clerk's own way, like a person whose eyes have been dazzled with some strong, rich, luxuriant piece of the Dutch or Flemish school, and who cannot taste, in immediate transition, the more pale, calm, correct gracefulness of an Italian Fresco; nevertheless, the eyes become cool as they gaze, and the mind is gradually yielded up to a less stimulant, but in the end a yet more captivating and soothing species of seduction. The pensive and pallid countenance, every delicate line of which seemed to breathe the very spirit of compact thoughtfulness—the mild, contemplative blue eyes, with now and then a flash of irresistible fire in them—the lips so full of precision and tastefulness, not perhaps without a dash of fastidiousness in the compression of their curves—the gentle, easy, but firm and dignified air and attitude—every thing about him had its magic, and the charm was not long in winning me effectually into its circle. The stream of his discourse flowed on calmly and clearly; the voice itself was mellow, yet commanding; the pronunciation exact, but not pe-

dantically so; the ideas rose gradually out of each other, and seemed to clothe themselves in the best and most accurate of phraseology, without the exertion of a single thought in its selection. The fascination was ere long complete; and, when he closed his speech, it seemed to me as if I had never before witnessed any specimen of the true " melliflua majestas" of Quinctilian.

The only defect in his manner of speaking, (and it is, after all, by no means a constant defect,) is a certain appearance of coldness, which, I suspect, is nearly inseparable from so much accuracy. Mr Cranstoun is a man of high birth and refined habits, and he has profited abundantly by all the means of education, which either his own or the sister country can afford. His success in his profession was not early, (although never was any success so rapid, after it once had a beginning); and he spent, therefore, many years of his manhood in the exquisite intellectual enjoyments of an elegant scholar, before he had either inclination or occasion to devote himself entirely to the more repulsive studies of the law. It is no wonder, then, that, in spite of his continual practice, and of his great natural eloquence, the impression of these delightful years should have become too deep ever to be concealed from view;

and that even in the midst of the most brilliant displays of his forensic exertion, there should mingle something in his air, which reminds us, that there is still another sphere, wherein his spirit would be yet more perfectly at home. To me, I must confess, although I am aware that you will laugh at me for doing so, there was always present, while I listened to this accomplished speaker, a certain feeling of pain. I could scarcely help regretting, that he should have become a barrister at all. The lucid power of investigation—the depth of argument—the richness of illustration—all set forth and embalmed in such a strain of beautiful and unaffected language, appeared to me to be almost too precious for the purposes to which they were devoted—even although, in this their devotion, they were also ministering to my own delight. I could not help saying to myself, what a pity that he, who might have added a new name to the most splendid triumphs of his country—who might perhaps have been equal to any one as historian, philosopher, or statesman, should have been induced, in the early and unconscious diffidence of his genius, to give himself to a profession which can never afford any adequate remuneration, either for the talents which he has de-

voted to its service, or the honour which he has conferred upon its name.

Having this feeling, I of course could not join in the regret which I heard expressed by all my friends in Edinburgh, in consequence of a prevailing rumour, that Mr Cranstoun intends ere long to withdraw himself from the practice of his profession; and yet I most perfectly sympathise in the feelings of those, who, themselves compelled to adhere to those toils from which he is enabled to shake himself free, are sorry to witness the removal of one, who was sufficient of himself alone to shed an air of grace and dignity over the whole profession—and almost, as it were, over all that belong to it. Well, indeed, may they be excused for wishing to defer as long as possible the removal of such a brother. To use the old Greek proverb, which Pericles has applied on a more tragical, but not on a more fitting occasion—it is, indeed, "taking away the spring from their year."

In the retreat of Mr Cranstoun, however, (should it really take place,) even these gentlemen, when they have leisure for a little more reflection, will probably see anything rather than a cause of regret. The mind which possesses within itself so many sources of delightful exertion, can never

be likely to sink into the wretchedness of indolence; and in whatever way its energies may be employed, there can be no question that good fruit, and lasting, will be the issue. Whether he return to those early pursuits in which he once promised to do so much, and of which, in the midst of his severer occupations, so many beautiful glimpses have from time to time escaped him; or whether he seek, in the retirement of his honourable ease, to reduce into an enduring form the product of his long assiduity in the study of his profession—whether he may prefer to take a high place in the literature, or the very highest in the jurisprudence of his country—all will acknowledge that he has "chosen a better part," than he could have ever obtained, by remaining in the dust and fever of a profession, which must be almost as fatiguing to the body as it is to the mind.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE already described Mr Jeffrey's appearance to you so often, that I need not say any thing in addition here, although it is in the Parliament-House certainly that his features assume their most powerful expression, and that, upon the whole, the exterior of this remarkable man is seen to the greatest advantage. When not pleading in one or other of the Courts, or before the Ordinary, he may commonly be seen standing in some corner, entertaining or entertained by such wit as suits the atmosphere of the place; but it is seldom that his occupations permit him to remain long in any such position. Ever and anon his lively conversation is interrupted by some undertaker-faced Solicitor, or perhaps by some hot bustling Exquisite-clerk, who comes to announce the opening of some new debate,

at which the presence of Mr Jeffrey is necessary; and away he darts like lightning to the indicated region, cleaving his way through the surrounding crowd with irresistible alacrity,—the more clumsy or more grave *doer* that had set him in motion, vainly puffing and elbowing to keep close in his wake. A few seconds have scarcely elapsed, till you hear the sharp, shrill, but deep-toned trumpet of his voice, lifting itself in some far-off corner, high over the discordant Babel that intervenes—period following period in one unbroken chain of sound, as if its links had had no beginning, and were to have no end.

I have told you in a former letter, that his pronunciation is wretched—it is a mixture of provincial English, with undignified Scotch, altogether snappish and offensive, and which would be quite sufficient to render the elocution of a more ordinary man utterly disgusting; but the flow of his eloquence is so overpoweringly rapid, so unweariedly energetic, so entirely unlike every other man's mode of speaking, that the pronunciation of the particular words is quite lost to one's view, in the midst of that continual effort which is required, in order to make the understanding, even the ear of the lis-

Mr. JEFFREY.

Alter et Idem.

tener, keep pace with the glowing velocity of the declamation. His words come more profusely than words ever came before, and yet it seems as if they were quite unable to follow, *passibus aequis*, the still more amazing speed of his thought. You sit, while minute follows minute uncounted and unheeded, in a state of painful excitation, as if you were in a room overlighted with gas, or close under the crash of a whole pealing orchestra.

This astonishing fluency and vivacity, if possessed by a person of very inferior talents, might for a little be sufficient to create an illusion in his favour ; and I have heard that such things have been. But the more you can overcome the effect of Mr Jeffrey's dazzling rapidity, and concentrate your attention on the ideas embodied with such supernatural facility, the greater will be your admiration. It is impossible to conceive the existence of a more fertile, teeming intellect. The flood of his illustration seems to be at all times rioting up to the very brim—yet he commands and restrains it with equal strength and skill ; or, if it does boil over for a moment, it spreads such a richness all around, that it is impossible to find fault with its extravagance. Surely never was such a luxuriant " copia fan-

di," united with so much terseness of thought, and brilliancy of imagination, and managed with so much unconscious, almost instinctive ease. If he be not the most delightful, he is certainly by far the most wonderful of speakers.

Like Cranstoun, this splendid rhetorician was many years at the Bar, before his success was at all proportioned to his talents. The reputation enjoyed by his Review, was both a friendly and a hostile thing to him as a barrister; for it excited universal attention to him whenever he made any appearance at the Bar, and yet it prevented many people from soliciting him to undertake the conduct of their cases, by inspiring a sort of fear, that his other, and more delightful, and better-rewarded pursuits, might perhaps prevent him from doing full justice to matters of every-day character—the paltry disputes of traders, and the mean tricks of attornies. All this, however, has been long since got over, and Jeffrey is now higher than almost any of his brethren, in his general character of an advocate, and decidedly above them all in more than one particular department of practice. The same powers which have enabled him to seize with so firm a grasp the opinion of the public, in regard to matters of taste and literature, give him, above

all, sway unrivalled over the minds of a jury. There cannot be a finer display of ingenuity, than his mode of addressing a set of plain conscientious men, whom it is his business to bamboozle. He does not indeed call up, as some have dared to do, the majesty of sleeping passions, to overawe the trembling indecision of judgment. The magic he wields is not of the high cast, which makes the subject of its working the conscious, yet willing slave of the sorcerer. His is a more cunning, but quite as effectual a species of tempting. He flatters the vanity of men, by making them believe, that the best proof of their own superiority will be their coming to the conclusion which he has proposed; and they submit with servile stupidity, at the very moment that they are pluming themselves on displaying the boldness and independence of adventurous intellect. In criminal trials, and in the newly-established Jury-Court for civil cases, Mr Jeffrey is now completely lord of the ascendant; at least, he has only "one brother near the throne."

LETTER XXXV.

TO THE SAME.

The three gentlemen whom I have already described to you, stand together, at a considerable elevation, above all the rest of their brethren, chiefly because they possess each of them a union of powers and talents, that must be sought for separately, (and may be found separately)—elsewhere. There are, indeed, no persons at present at the Scottish Bar, who can pretend to be quite so great lawyers as Mr Clerk or Mr Cranstoun, but there are some who come so near to them in this respect, that their inferiority would be much less observed or acknowledged, did they possess any of the extraordinary abilities in pleading displayed by those very remarkable men. And, in like manner, there are some others who speak so well, that they might easily take place with Mr Cranstoun

or Mr Jeffrey, did they bring with them any measure of legal knowledge, which might sustain a comparison with that of the former, or were they capable of rivalling that intuitive keenness of intellect or of genius, which supplies, and more than supplies, the want of ordinary drudgery and ordinary information in the case of the latter.

There is one gentleman, however, whose inferiority of practice I am much at a loss to account for, because I understand that he is, if not a first-rate, certainly a very excellent lawyer, and I have myself seen and heard enough to be able to attest, that as a pleader, he is, in many respects, of the very first order of eminence. His practice, however, is also very considerable, and perhaps he is inferior in this respect to his rivals, only because it is impossible that more than three or four men should, at the same time, hold first-rate practice at this Bar. He seems to have been cast by Nature in the happiest of all possible moulds, for the ordinary routine of business, and withal to have received abundantly gifts that might qualify him for doing justice to many of the highest and noblest functions, which one of his profession can ever be called upon to dis-

charge. Nay, great and splendid and multifarious as are the faculties of the three wonderful men of whom I have spoken to you, there are some things in which they are each and all of them totally and manifestly deficient, and it so happens that those very things are to be found in perfection in this Mr Henry Cockburn. This, however, is only adding to a difficulty, which, as I have already said, I find myself unable adequately to resolve.

It is, I think, a thousand pities that this gentleman should wear a wig in pleading; for when he throws off that incumbrance, and appears in his natural shape, nothing can be finer than the form of his head. He is quite bald, and his is one of those foreheads, which, in spite of antiquity, are the better for wanting hair. Full of the lines of discernment and acumen immediately above the eye-brows, and over these again of the marks of imagination and wit, his skull rises highest of all in the region of veneration; and this structure, I apprehend, coincides exactly as it should do with the peculiarities of his mind and temperament. His face also is one of a very striking kind—pale and oval in its outline, having the nose perfectly aquiline, although not very large —the mouth rather wide, but, nevertheless, firm

THE ... MORE ...

and full of meaning—the eyes beautifully shaped, in colour of a rich clear brown, and capable of conveying a greater range of expression than almost any I have seen. At first, one sees nothing (I mean when he wears his wig) but a countenance of great shrewdness, and a pair of eyes that seem to be as keen as those of a falcon; but it is delightful to observe, when he gets animated with the subject of his discourse, how this countenance vibrates into harmony with the feelings he would convey, and how these eyes, above all, lose every vestige of their sharpness of glance, and are made to soften into the broadest and sweetest smile of good humour, or kindle with bright beams, eloquent to overflowing of deepest sympathy in all the nobler and more mysterious workings of the human heart. It is when these last kinds of expression reveal themselves, that one feels wherein Mr Cockburn is superior to all his more celebrated rivals. Of all the great pleaders of the Scottish Bar, he is the only one who is capable of touching, with a bold and assured hand, the chords of feeling; who can, by one plain word and one plain look, convey the whole soul of tenderness, or appeal, with the authority of a true prophet, to a yet higher class of feelings, which slumber in many bosoms, but are dead, I think, in none.

As every truly pathetic speaker must be, Mr Cockburn is a homely speaker; but he carries his homeliness to a length which I do not remember ever to have heard any other truly great speaker venture upon. He uses the Scottish dialect—always its music, and not unfrequently its words—quite as broadly as Mr Clerk, and perhaps, at first hearing, with rather more vulgarity of effect—for he is a young man, and I have already hinted, that no young man can speak Scotch with the same impunity as an old one. Nevertheless, I am sure, no man who has witnessed the effect which Mr Cockburn produces upon a Scottish Jury, would wish to see him alter any thing in his mode of addressing them. He is the best teller of a plain story I ever heard. He puts himself completely upon a level with those to whom he speaks; he enters into all the feelings with which ordinary persons are likely to listen to the first statement from a partial mouth, and endeavours, with all his might, to destroy the impression of distrustfulness, which he well knows he has to encounter. He utters no word which he is not perfectly certain his hearers understand, and he points out no inference before he has prepared the way for it, by making his hearers understand perfectly how he himself has

been brought to adopt it. He puts himself in the place of his audience; an obvious rule, no doubt; but in practice, above all others, difficult, and which it requires the skill of a very master in the knowledge of human nature to follow with precision. Instead of labouring, as most orators do, to impress on the minds of his audience a high notion of his own powers and attainments—this man seems to be anxious about nothing except to make them forget that he wears a gown, and to be satisfied that they are listening to a person who thinks, feels, and judges, exactly like themselves. He despises utterly the Ciceronian and Pindaric maxim,

Χρὴ θέμεν πρόσωπον τηλαυγές.

It is not his ambition to be admired: he wishes only to be trusted. He does not, by one word or gesture, show that he aspires to be reckoned a great man; but it is plain, he would give the world they should believe him to be an honest one. And after he has been allowed to tell his story in his own way, for ten minutes, I would defy Diogenes himself to doubt it.

His use of the language, and his still more exquisite use of the images and allusions of common Scottish life, must contribute in the most powerful manner to his success in this first great

object of all his rhetoric. There is an air of broad and undisguised sincerity in the simple tones and energetic phrases he employs, which finds its way like a charm to the very bottom of the hearts around him. He sees it painted in their beaming and expanding faces, and sees, and knows, and feels at once, that his eloquence is persuasive. Once so far victorious, he is thenceforth irresistible. He has established an understanding between himself and his audience, a feeling of fellowship and confidence of communion, which nothing can disturb. The electricity of thought and of sentiment passes from his face to theirs, and thrills back again from theirs to his. He has fairly come into contact; he sees their breasts lie bare to his weapon, and he will make no thrust in vain.

I heard him address a jury the other day in behalf of a criminal, and never did I so much admire the infallible tact of his homely eloquence. In the first part of his speech, he made use of nothing but the most pedestrian language, and the jokes with which he interspersed his statement were familiar even to coarseness, although the quaintness of his humorous diction was more than enough to redeem that defect. Nothing could surpass the cunning skill with

which he threw together circumstances apparently (and essentially) remote, in order to make out a feasible story for his culprit, and for a time it seemed as if he had succeeded in making the jury see everything with such eyes as he had been pleased to give them. But when he came upon one fact, which even his ingenuity could not varnish, and which even their confidence could not be brought to pass over, there needed not a single word to let him see exactly in what situation he stood. He read their thoughts in their eyes, and turned the canvas with the touch of a magician. Instead of continuing to press upon their unwilling understandings, he threw himself at once upon the open hearts which he had gained. The whole expression of his physiognomy was changed in an instant, and a sympathetic change fell softly and darkly upon every face that was turned to him. His baffled ingenuity, his detected sophistry, all was forgotten in a moment. He had drawn more powerful arrows from his quiver, and he prepared to pierce with them whom he listed. His voice was no longer clear and distinct, but broken and trembling—his look had lost its brightness, and his attitude its firmness. His lips quivered, and his tongue faultered, and a large drop gathered slowly under his eyelids,

through which the swimming pupil shot faint and languid rays, that were more eloquent than words.

And yet his words, though they came slowly, and fell heavily, were far better than eloquent. The criminal had been the son of respectable parents—and he was yet young—and he had no hope but in their mercy; and well did his advocate know what topics to press on men that were themselves sons and fathers—and themselves conscious of weaknesses and errors and transgressions. It was now that I felt, in all its potency, the intense propriety of the native dialect, in which he chose to deliver himself. The feelings and sympathies which he wished to nourish—the reverend images which he wished to call up in aid of his failing argument—would have appeared weak and dim in comparison, had they been set forth in any other than the same speech to whose music the ears around him had been taught to thrill in infancy. The operation of translating them into a less familiar tongue, would have chilled the fresh fervour of

> "Those common thoughts of Mother Earth,
> Her simplest thoughts, her simplest tears."

He knew that "Man's heart is an holy thing," and had no fear of offending by the simplicity of the words in which he clothed his worship.

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The person against whom Mr Cockburn is most frequently pitched in the Jury Court for civil cases, is Mr Jeffrey; and after what I have said of both, you will easily believe that it is a very delightful thing to witness the different means by which these two most accomplished speakers endeavour to attain the same ends. It is the wisest thing either of them can do, to keep as wide as possible from the track which Nature has pointed out to the other, and both are in general so wise as to follow implicitly and exclusively her infallible direction. In the play of his wit, the luxuriance of his imagination, the beauty of his expression, Mr Jeffrey is as much beyond his rival, as in the depth of his reasoning, and the ge-

neral richness and commanding energy of his whole intellect. In a case where the reason of his hearers alone is concerned, he has faculties which enable him to seize from the beginning, and preserve to the end, a total and unquestioned superiority. There is no speaker in Britain that deals out his illustrations with so princely a profusion, or heaps upon every image and every thought, that springs from an indefatigable intellect, so lavish a garniture of most exquisite and most apposite language. There is no man who generalizes with a tact so masterly as Jeffrey; no multiplicity of facts can distract or dazzle him for a moment; he has a clue that brings him safe and triumphant out of every labyrinth, and he walks in the darkest recesses of his detail, with the air and the confidence of one that is sure of his conclusion, and sees it already bright before him, while every thing is Chaos and Erebus to his bewildered attendants. The delight which he communicates to his hearers, by the display of powers so extraordinary, is sufficient to make them rejoice in the confession of their own inferiority; careless of the point to which his steps are turned, they soon are satisfied to gaze upon his brightness, and be contented that such a star cannot lead them into darkness. A

plain man, who for the first time is addressed by him, experiences a kind of sensation to which he has heretofore been totally a stranger. It is like the cutting off the cataract from a blind man's eye, when the first glorious deluge of light brings with it anything rather than distinctness of vision. He has no leisure to think of the merits of the case before him; he is swallowed up in dumb overwhelming wonder of the miraculous vehicle, in which one side of it is expounded. The rapidity with which word follows word, and image follows image, and argument follows argument, keeps his intellect panting in vain to keep up with the stream, and gives him no time to speculate on the nature of the shores along which he is whirled, or the point towards which he is carried.

But when the object of all this breathless wonder has made an end of speaking, it is not to be doubted that a plain, sensible, and conscientious person, who knows that the sacred cause of justice is to be served or injured by the decision which he himself must give, may very naturally experience a very sudden and a very uncomfortable revulsion of ideas. That distrust of himself, which had attended and grown upon him all the while he listened, may now perhaps give way, in

no inconsiderable measure, to distrust of the orator, whose winged words are yet ringing in his aching ears. The swiftness of the career has been such, that he cannot, on reflection, gather anything more than a very vague and unsatisfactory idea of the particular steps of his progress, and it is no wonder that he should pause a little before he decide with himself, that there is no safer and surer issue to which he might have been conducted in some less brilliant vehicle, and with some less extraordinary degree of speed. Nor can anything be more likely to affect the mind of a person pausing and hesitating in this way, with a delightful feeling of refreshment and security, than the simple, leisurely, and unostentatious manner in which such a speaker as Mr Cockburn may commence an address which has for its object to produce a quite opposite impression. When he sees a face so full of apparent candour and simplicity, and hears accents of so homely a character, and is allowed time to ponder over every particular statement as it is made, and consider with himself how it hinges upon that which has preceded, before he is called upon to connect it with something that is to follow—it is no wonder that he should feel as if he had returned to his own home after a flight in a para-

chute, and open himself to the new rhetorician with something of the reposing confidence due to an old and tried associate and adviser.

As for causes in the Criminal Court, wherein mere argument is not all that is necessary, or such causes in the Jury Court as give occasion for any appeal to the feelings and affections—I fancy, there are few who have heard both of them that would not assign the palm to Mr Cockburn without the smallest hesitation. Whether from the natural constitution of Mr Jeffrey's mind, or from the exercises and habits in which he has trained and established its energies, it would seem as if he had himself little sympathy for the more simple and unadorned workings of the affections; and accordingly he has, and deserves to have, little success, when he attempts to command and controul those workings for purposes immediately his own. I have never seen any man of genius fail so miserably in any attempt, as he does whenever he strives to produce a pathetic effect by his eloquence. It is seen and felt in a moment, that he is wandering from his own wide and fertile field of dominion, and every heart which he would invade, repels him with coldness. It is not by an artificial piling together of beautiful words, and beautiful images, that

one can awe into subjection the rebellious pride of man's bosom. It is not by such dazzling spells as these, that a speaker or a writer can smite the rock, and

> "Wake the sacred source of sympathetic tears."

Mr Jeffrey is the Prince of Rhetoricians; but Mr Cockburn, in every other respect greatly his inferior, is more fortunate here. He is an Orator, and the passions are the legitimate and willing subjects of his deeper sway. As the Stagyrite would have expressed it, he has both the πιϛις ἠθικη and the πιϛις παθετικη; but Mr Jeffrey has no pretensions to the possession of either.

P. M.

LETTER XXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

FAR inferior to Mr Cockburn, or to any of the three gentlemen I first described, as a speaker—but far above Mr Cockburn, and far above Mr Jeffrey, as a lawyer, is Mr James Moncrieff, without all doubt at this moment the most rising man at the Scottish Bar. This gentleman is son to Sir Henry Moncrieff, a well-known leader of the Scottish Church, of whom I shall, perhaps, have occasion to speak at length hereafter. He has a countenance full of the expression of quick-sightedness and logical power, and his voice and manner of delivering himself, are such as to add much to this the natural language of his countenance. He speaks in a firm, harsh tone, and his phraseology aspires to no merit beyond that of closeness and precision. And yet, although entirely without display of imagination, and al-

though apparently scornful to excess of every merely ornamental part of the rhetorical art, it is singular that Mr Moncrieff should be not only a fervid and animated speaker, but infinitely more keen and fervid throughout the whole tenor of his discourse, and more given to assist his words by violence of gesture, than any of the more imaginative speakers whom I have already endeavoured to describe. When he addresses a jury, he does not seem ever to think of attacking their feelings; but he is determined and resolved, that he will omit no exertion which may enable him to get the command over their reason. He plants himself before them in an attitude of open defiance; he takes it for granted that they are against him; and he must, and will, subdue them to his power. Wherever there is room to lay a finger, he fixes a grappling-iron, and continues to tear and tug at every thing that opposes him, till the most stubborn and obstinate incredulity is glad to purchase repose by assenting to all he demands. It cannot be said, that there is much pleasure to be had from listening to this pleader; but it is always an inspiriting thing to witness the exertion of great energies, and no man who is fond of excitement will complain of his entertainment.

His choleric demeanour gives a zest to the dryness of the discussions in which he is commonly to be found engaged. His unmusical voice has so much nerve and vigour in its discords, that after hearing it on several occasions, I began to relish the grating effect it produces upon the tympanum—as a child gets fond of pepper-corns, after two or three burnings of its mouth. And as acquired tastes are usually more strong than natural ones, I am not disposed to wonder that Mr Moncrieff should have some admirers among the constant attendants upon the Scottish courts, who think him by far the most agreeable speaker of all that address them. They may say of him, as my friend Charles Lamb says of tobacco,

> " Roses—violets—but toys
> For the smaller sort of boys—
> Or for greener damsels meant—
> Thou art the only manly scent."

It is not, however, as a speaker, that Mr Moncrieff has his greatest game before him. Mr Clerk has past his grand climacteric; and unless universal rumour say falsely, Mr Cranstoun is about to retire. There is no question, that whenever either of these leaders is removed, his baton of command must come into the strenuous grasp

of Mr Moncrieff. Already he is a great and profound lawyer, so far as knowledge is concerned, and the natural energy of his intellect will by every day's practice increase its power of throwing new light upon what is known to himself and to others. Moreover, in these Scottish Courts, a very great proportion of the most important pleadings are carried on in writing,—a department in which Mr Moncrieff has few rivals at present, and in all probability will ere long have none. For it is not to be supposed, that either Mr Jeffrey or Mr Cockburn, or any other barrister who possesses the more popular and fascinating kinds of elocution, will ever choose to interfere, to any considerable extent, with a style of practice so much more laborious. It is quite evident, that Mr Moncrieff is within sight of the very summit of his profession ; and it does not seem as if there were any one lower down the hill, who might be likely, by any bold and sudden movement, to reach the post of honour before him.

Another speaker of considerable note is Mr Murray, the same gentleman of whom I spoke as presiding at the Burns's Dinner last month. This barrister is in some respects so very near the point of excellence, that the first time one

hears him, one cannot help wondering that he should not be more talked of than he is. Of all his brother advocates, with the single exception of Mr Cranstoun, he has the most courtly presence and demeanour. His features are good, although not striking; his smile has something very agreeable in it; and his gestures are as elegant as Mr Cranstoun's, and infinitely more easy. When he gets upon a sarcastic key, he keeps dallying with it in a very light, loving, and graceful manner, and is altogether very much calculated for delighting any popular audience in an ordinary case. As pleasantry, however, is his chief forte, it cannot be expected that he should attain through that alone to the first-rate eminence of favour and reputation, so long as he has to enter the lists with the far more pure and classical wit of Mr Cranstoun, the more copious and brilliant wit of Mr Jeffrey, and the more effectual, irresistible, sheer humour of Mr Clerk or Mr Cockburn. As for pathos, I hope he will never attempt it; if he does adventure upon such an Icarian flight, it will certainly be, like his prototype, *mox daturus nomina ponto*.

These are all that are ever in the present time talked of as great speakers at the Scottish Bar. At whatever corner of the Parliament-House

you may happen to take your stand, you are almost sure to be within hearing of one or other of them, or within the rush of listeners setting in towards the quarter where one or other of them is expected shortly to make his appearance. There are several, however, who would very fain be supposed to belong to the same class with these, and some, no doubt, who may hereafter belong to it. Among the former, conspicuous and loud, I found my old acquaintance Mr J. P. Grant, for he has deserted Westminster-Hall, and resumed of late the advocate's gown he had worn here in the days of his youth; chiefly, I am told, with an eye to the new Jury-Court in civil causes, where he expected his English practice would be of great service to him. I do not discover, however, that his return to the Edinburgh Bar has borne much resemblance either

> " To a re-appearing star,
> Or a glory from afar."

His extravagant vehemence of gesture, and his foaming cataract of words, seem to be regarded with rather a mortifying kind of indifference by the Juries; and as for the Judges, nothing can be less likely to prove effective in demolishing their quiet and resolute defensiveness, than that

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incessant crash of ill-directed artillery which is levelled against them by Mr Grant. He quite mis-calculates his elevation; there is a most mistaken curve in his parabolas; and the shot of this noisy engineer are all spent before they reach the point at which they are aimed. In short, Mr Grant is by no means listened to here in Edinburgh with the same attention which he is used to receive from the House of Commons; so that the rule about lawyers making bad speakers in Parliament may be considered as exactly inverted in this instance. Not that Mr Grant is a good speaker even in Parliament, but there he certainly is an useful, and apparently an acceptable one. It would be too much for poor human nature to meet with equal success in every thing. But although I am no admirer of Mr Grant's eloquence, I assure you I was very glad to meet once more with an old acquaintance, for whose character, as a gentleman, no one can have a higher respect, and for whose good company over a bottle of good claret, nobody can have a more sincere relish than myself. I spent a very pleasant evening with him yesterday at Mr J——'s, where we talked over a thousand old Temple stories, and were as happy as

kings. He used to be continually about poor Tom Harris's Chambers, when he lived in Fig-tree Court—I won't say how many years ago.

P. M.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

THERE is another class of Lawyers, however, who have no ambition of rivalling the Cranstouns and the Jeffreys—who walk in a totally different course from them—and attain in their own walk, if not to an equally splendid, certainly to an almost as lucrative species of reputation. These are the class of your plain, thorough-going, jog-trot Lawyers, who are seldom employed in cases of the very highest importance, but whose sober, regular, business-like manner of doing every thing that is entrusted to them, procures for them an even, uninterrupted, unvarying life of well-paid labour. It is upon these men that the ordinary run of your common-place litigation scatters its constantly refreshing, but seldom brightening dew. The lungs of these men are employed, for

a certain number of hours every morning, in pleading, and every evening in dictating. With them, the intellectual mill-horse never stops a moment in his narrow round, unless it be to allow time for eating, drinking, and sleeping. The natural attitude of these men, is that of labouring at a side-bar. Their heads do not feel comfortable when their wigs are off. If they call for a glass of ale during dinner, they astound the lackey with a big phrase from the Style-book. If you carry one of them into the midst of the most magnificent scenery of Nature, his thoughts will still tarry behind him within the narrow and dusty precincts of the Parliament-House of Edinburgh. You shall see him pluck a *Condescendence* from his pocket, and con over its sprawling pages, although the grandest of mountains be behind, and the most beautiful of lakes before him.

> "'Bear witness, many a pensive sigh
> Of thoughtful ——— when he strays
> Alone upon Loch Veol's heights,
> Or by Loch Lomond's braes."

These are the true plodders of the profession—nothing can be more genuine than their obscure

devotion—" they and the other slaves of the Lamp."

During one of my earliest visits to the Parliament-House, when I was picking up from various quarters the first rudiments of that information which I have now been retailing for your benefit, an elderly lawyer, by name Mr Forsyth, was pointed out to me, I forget by whom, as standing at the head of this class. On talking over these matters with my friend Mr Wastle, however, I found reason to doubt whether this person might not be well entitled to take his place among those of a higher order, and the result of my own subsequent observation and diligent attendance on these Courts of Justice, has certainly been to confirm me in this notion of the matter. There is, indeed, something so very singular and characteristic in the whole appearance of Mr Forsyth, that, even at first sight, I should scarcely have been persuaded, without some difficulty, to set him down as a mere ordinary drudge of his profession. I am so deeply imbued with the prejudices of a physiognomist and a craniologist, that I could not be easily brought to think there was nothing extraordinary in one on whom Nature had stamped so very peculiar a signet.

I have never seen a countenance that combined in such a strange manner, originality of expression with features of common-place formation. His forehead is indeed massy and square, so far as it is seen; but his wig comes so low down, as to conceal about the whole of its structure. His nose is large and firm, but shaped without the least approach to one beautiful line. His mouth is of the widest, and rudely-fashioned; but whether he closes it entirely, or, what is more common, holds it slightly open with a little twist to the left, it is impossible to mistake its intense sagacity of expression, for the common-place archness of a mere practised dealer in litigation. His cheeks are ponderous, and look as if they had been cast in brass, and his chin projects with an irresistible air of ungullibility. But the whole of this would be nothing without his eyes. The one of these is black as jet, and looks out clearly from among a tangled and ever-twinkling web of wrinkles. The other is light in hue, and glimmers through a large and watery surface, contracted by no wrinkles—(the lids on that side being large, smooth, and oily)—generally in a direction as opposite as possible from that which its more vivacious neighbour happens to be following for the moment. It has not, however,

the appearance of being blind, to one who views it disconnected from the other, and nothing, indeed, can be more striking than the total difference of effect which the countenance produces, according as it is viewed in sinistral or in dextral profile. On the one side, you have the large, glazed, gray eye, reflecting an air of unutterable innocence and suavity on all the features it seems to be illuminating. On the other, you have the small black iris, tipped in the centre with an unquenchable dazzling flame, and throwing on everything above and below it a lustre of acumen, that Argus might have been proud to rival with all his ubiquity of glances. Such a face as this was never meant to be the index of any common mind. "Nihil inutile, nihil vanum, nihil supervacaneum in naturâ," as the Prince of English intellect has well expressed it.

My friend Wastle informs me, that the history of this gentleman has been no less peculiar than is his physiognomy. In his youth he was destined for the Kirk, and proceeded so far in that way as to be dubbed a licentiate, or preacher, which is the nearest approach in the Scottish Church to our deacon's orders. But—from causes, it is probable, of no uncommon nature—he soon became disgusted with the idea of the Presbyte-

rian career, and determined to become an Advocate. In those days, however, that was not quite so easy a matter of attainment as it has since come to be. The Advocates at that time were accustomed to exercise a discretionary right, of excluding from their Faculty whomsoever they chose to consider as unfit to enter—not merely on the score of learning or talent, (for, in regard to these, the pretence still lingers)—but, if it so pleased their fancy, on the score of want of birth, or status in society—a notion, the revival of which, if attempted now-a-days, would probably be scouted by a very triumphant majority of their body. What Mr Forsyth's birth might be I know not; but so it was, that the admission of the young licentiate, against whose character no one could say one word, was opposed most stiffly in the Faculty meetings, and he did not succeed in his object till after repeated applications had testified the firmness of his purpose, and time had produced its proper effect, in making his opponents ashamed of contradicting it.

He became an Advocate, therefore; and by degrees, the same inflexible pertinacity of will which had procured his admission into the Faculty, elevated him to a considerable share of practice. Without making any one appearance

that could ever be called splendid, and in the teeth of a great number of men that did make such appearances, Mr Forsyth was resolved that he should make a fortune at the Bar, and that was enough. From day to day, and from hour to hour, he was at his post. He came to the Court earlier than any one else, and he staid there later. His sagacious countenance was never amissing; and they who saw that countenance perpetually before them, could not fail to read its meaning. Other men laboured by fits and starts, and always with a view to some particular and immediate object of ambition; this man laboured continually, because it was his principle and his belief that he could not be happy without labouring, and because he knew and felt that it was impossible a man of his talents should labour long without being appreciated and rewarded in the end.

If he had no brief, he did not care for that want, or allow himself to take advantage of any pretence for idleness. His strong intellect could no more do without work, than his robust body could subsist without food. If he had not enough to occupy him in the affairs of individual men, he had always the species, and its concerns, on which to exercise his strength. And

at a time when nobody suspected him of possessing either ambition or ability for anything more than the drudgery of his profession, he published a book on the Principles of Moral Science, coarse indeed in many of its conceptions, and coarse in its language, but overflowing everywhere with the marks of most intense observation, and most masculine originality. From this time, the stamp of his intellect was ascertained, and those who had been most accustomed to speak slightingly of him, found themselves compelled to confess his power.

His natural want of high eloquence has prevented him from being the rival of the great lawyers I have described, in their finest field; and a certain impatience of all ornament, has prevented him from rivalling them in writing. Neither, as I am informed, has he ever been able to penetrate into the depths of legal arguments with the same clear felicity which some of those remarkable men have displayed. But he has been willing to task the vigour of an Herculean understanding to a species of work which these men would have thought themselves entitled to despise, and to slur over, if it did come into their hands, with comparative inattention; and it is thus that his fortune has been made. He can-

not do what some of his brethren can do; but whatever he can do, he will do. While they reserve the full exertion of their fine energies for occasions that catch their fancy, and promise opportunity of extraordinary display, he allows his fancy to have nothing to say in the matter; and display is a thing of which he never dreams. He has not the magical sword that will shiver steel, nor the magical shield that will dazzle an advancing foe into blindness; but he is clothed *cap-a-pee* in harness of proof, and he has his mace always in his hand. He is contented to be ranged with the ordinary class of champions; but they who meet him, feel that his vigour might well entitle him to exchange thrusts with their superiors.

It would surely argue a very strange degree of obstinacy, to deny that all this speaks of an intellect of no ordinary cast. There is no walk of exertion which may not be dignified; and I imagine it is not often that such a walk as that of Mr Forsyth has found such an intellect as his willing to adorn it.

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There are still several of the Scottish Advocates whom I ought to describe to you; but I

reserve them, and their peculiarities, for matter of oral communication. I shall have a particular pleasure in giving you my ideas concerning some of the younger, and as yet less known members of the profession, in order that when you make out your own long intended visit to Scotland, you may have your eye upon these, and report to me more accurately the nature of their progress. In truth, even here it would have been a very easy thing to expatiate a little on the expanding energies and rising reputations of such men as the acute and energetic Skene—Walker—Hope—Macniell, and many others, whom I could mention. But my only object, in the mean time, was to give you some general notion of those who at present make the most conspicuous figure among an order of men, of whom, although their fame and reputation be everywhere great, yet very little is, in general, known accurately by such as have not personally visited the scene of their exertions. I suppose I have already said enough to convince you that the high reputation enjoyed by the Scottish jurisconsults is far from being an unmerited reputation; and that, taking the size and population of the country into view, Scotland has at least as much reason to be proud of her Bar as any country in Europe.

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Till within these few years, it was the custom for the whole of the Judges of whom the Court of Session is composed, to sit together upon the same bench; and Scottish litigants had thus the advantage of submitting their causes to the joint decision of a much greater number of arbiters than those of England ever had to do with. The enormous increase of litigation, however, which resulted from the extended population, and, above all, from the extended commerce of Scotland, joined, perhaps, with sufficient experience that this multitude of counsellors brought disadvantages, as well as advantages along with it, gave rise to a separation of the Civil Court into two Divisions, each of which now exercises the full powers formerly vested in the whole body; the Lord President of the Session retaining his place as President of the First,

and the Lord Justice-Clerk (who acts also, as his title denotes, as head of the Criminal Court,) being President of the Second of these Divisions. From all that I can hear, this arrangement has been productive of the happiest effects; an infinitely greater quantity of business being of course discussed, and no business whatever being less thoroughly, or less satisfactorily discussed, than when each individual case was at once, as the popular phrase ran, "*ta'en before the Fifeteen.*"

The nature of the causes with which these two courts have been chiefly occupied since I began to attend their sittings, has been such, that although I have had great amusement in hearing the particular sides of many questions set forth to the best advantage, by the ingenuity of the particular pleaders, there has been much less to amuse me, a stranger to the technicalities of the Scottish law, in the more concise and more abstruse disquisitions wherein the several Judges have delivered their opinions concerning the legal merits of the arguments employed in my hearing. The external appearance of the Courts, however, is abundantly dignified and impressive; and, without being able to understand most of what was delivered from the Bench,

I have heard more than enough to satisfy me that there is no want of talent in the Judges who take the principal direction and conduct of the business brought before them. The President of the Second Division, in particular, seems to be possessed of all the discernment and diligence which it is pleasing to see a Judge display; and he possesses, moreover, all that dignity of presence and demeanour, which is scarcely less necessary, and which is infinitely more rare, in those to whom the high duties of such stations are entrusted. In his other Court, (the Criminal, or Justiciary Court, of which also I have witnessed several sittings,) I could better understand what was going forward, and better appreciate the qualities by which this eminent Judge is universally acknowledged to confer honour upon his function.

In his Division of the Civil Court, one of his most respected assessors is Lord Robertson, son to the great historian; nor could I see, without a very peculiar interest, the son of such a man occupying and adorning such a situation, in the midst of a people in whose minds his name must be associated with so many feelings of gratitude and admiration. It is perhaps the finest and most precious of all the rewards which a man of

virtue and genius receives, from the nation to whose service his virtue and his genius have ministered, that he establishes for his children a true and lofty species of nobility in the eyes of that people, and secures for all *their* exertions, (however these may differ in species from his own,) a watchful and a partial attention from generations long subsequent to that on which the first and immediate lustre of his own reputation and his own presence may have been reflected. The truth is, that a great national author connects himself for ever with all the better part of his nation, by the ties of an intellectual kinsmanship—ties, which, in his own age, are scarcely less powerful than those of the kinsmanship of blood, and which, instead of evaporating and being forgotten in the course of a few generations, as the bonds of blood must inevitably be, are only rivetted the faster by every year that passes over them. It is not possible to imagine that any lineal descendant of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Locke, or Clarendon, or any one of the great authors of England, should have borne, in the present day, the name of his illustrious progenitor, and seen himself, and his great name, treated with neglect by his countrymen. The son of such a man as the Historian of Scotland, is

well entitled to share in these honourable feelings of hereditary attachment among the people of Scotland;—and he does share in them. Even to me, I must confess it afforded a very genuine delight, to be allowed to contemplate the features of the father, as reflected and preserved in the living features of his son. A more careless observer would not, perhaps, be able to trace any very striking resemblance between the face of Lord Robertson and the common portraits of the Historian; but I could easily do so. In those of the prints which represent him at an early period of his life, the physiognomy of Robertson is not seen to its best advantage. There is, indeed, an air of calmness and tastefulness even in them, which cannot be overlooked or mistaken; but it is in those later portraits which give the features, after they had been divested of their fulness and smoothness of outline, and filled with the deeper lines of age and comparative extenuation, that one traces, with most ease and satisfaction, the image of genius, and the impress of reflection. And it is to those last portraits that I could perceive the strongest likeness in the general aspect of the Judge—but, most of all, in his gray and over-hanging eye-brows, and

eyes, eloquent equally of sagacity of intellect, and gentleness of temper.

In the other Division of the Court, I yesterday heard, without exception, the finest piece of judicial eloquence delivered in the finest possible way by the Lord President Hope. The requisites for this kind of eloquence are of course totally different from those of accomplished barristership—and I think they are in the present clever age infinitely more uncommon. When possessed in the degree of perfection in which this Judge possesses them, they are calculated assuredly to produce a yet nobler species of effect, than even the finest display of the eloquence of the Bar ever can command. They produce this effect the more powerfully, because there are comparatively very few occasions on which they can be called upon to attempt producing it; but besides this adventitious circumstance, they are essentially higher in their quality, and the feelings which they excite are proportionally deeper in their whole character and complexion.

I confess I was struck with the whole scene, the more because I had not heard anything which might have prepared me to expect a scene of so much interest, or a display of so much power.

But it is impossible, that the presence and air of any Judge should grace the judgment-seat more than those of the Lord President did upon this occasion. When I entered, the Court was completely crowded in every part of its area and galleries, and even the avenues and steps of the Bench were covered with persons who could not find accommodation for sitting. I looked to the Bar, naturally expecting to see it filled with some of the most favourite Advocates; but was astonished to perceive, that not one gentleman in a gown was there, and, indeed, that the whole of the first row, commonly occupied by the barristers, was entirely deserted. An air of intense expectation, notwithstanding, was stamped upon all the innumerable faces around me, and from the direction in which most of them were turned, I soon gathered that the eloquence they had come to hear, was to proceed from the Bench. The Judges, when I looked towards them, had none of those huge piles of papers before them, with which their desk is usually covered in all its breadth, and in all its length. Neither did they appear to be occupied among themselves with arranging the order or substance of opinions about to be delivered. Each Judge sat in silence, wrapt up in himself, but calm, and

with the air of sharing in the general expectation of the audience, rather than that of meditating on anything which he himself might be about to utter. In the countenance of the President alone, I fancied I could perceive the workings of anxious thought. He leaned back in his chair; his eyes were cast downwards; and his face seemed to be covered with a deadly paleness, which I had never before seen its masculine and commanding lines exhibit.

At length he lifted up his eyes, and at a signal from his hand, a man clad respectably in black rose from the second row of seats behind the Bar. I could not at first see his face; but from his air, I perceived at once that he was there in the capacity of an offender. A minute or more elapsed before a word was said, and I heard it whispered behind me, that he was a well-known solicitor or agent of the Court, who had been detected in some piece of mean chicanery, and I comprehended that the President was about to rebuke him for his transgression. A painful struggle of feelings seemed to keep the Judge silent, after he had put himself into the attitude of speaking, and the silence in the Court was as profound as midnight—but at last, after one or two ineffectual attempts, he seemed

to subdue his feelings by one strong effort, and he named the man before him, in a tone that made my pulse quiver, and every cheek around me grow pale.

Another pause followed—and then, all at once, the face of the Judge became flushed all over with crimson, and he began to roll out the sentences of his rebuke with a fervour of indignation, that made me wonder by what emotions the torrent could have been so long withheld from flowing. His voice is the most hollow and sonorous I ever heard, and its grave wrath filled the whole circuit of the walls around, thrilling and piercing every nerve of every ear, like the near echo of an earthquake. The trumpet-note of an organ does not peal through the vaults of a cathedral with half so deep a majesty; and I thought within myself that the offence must indeed be great, which could deserve to call down upon any head, such a palsying sweep of terrors. It is impossible I should convey to you any idea of the power of this awful voice; but, never till I myself heard it, did I appreciate the just meaning of Dante, where he says, "*Even in the wilderness, the Lion will tremble, if he hears the voice of a just Man.*"

Had either the sentiments or the language of

the Judge been other than worthy of such a vehicle, there is no question that the effect of its natural potency would soon have passed away. But what sentiments can be more worthy of borrowing energy from the grandest music of Nature, than those with which an upright and generous soul contemplates, from its elevation of purity, the black and loathsome mazes of the tangled web of deceit? The paltry caitiff that stood before him, must have felt himself too much honoured, in attracting even indignation from one so far above his miserable sphere. With such feelings, and such a voice, it was impossible that the rebuke he uttered should not have been an eloquent rebuke. But even the language in which the rebuke was clothed, would have been enough, of itself alone, to beat into atoms the last lingering reed of self-complacency, on which detected meanness might have endeavoured to prop up the hour and agony of its humiliation. *Mens est id quod facit disertum;* and whatever harrowing words the haughtiness of insulted virtue, the scorn of honour, the coldness of disdain, the bitterness of pity might supply, came ready as flashes from a bursting thunder-cloud, to scatter ten-fold dismay upon this poor wretch, and make his flesh and his spirit creep chill

within him like a bruised adder. His coward eye was fascinated by the glance that killed him, and he durst not look for a moment from the face of his chastiser. He did look for a moment; at one terrible word he looked wildly round, as if to seek for some whisper of protection, or some den of shelter. But he found none. And even after the rebuke was at an end, he stood like the statue of Fear, frozen in the same attitude of immovable desertedness.

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This Judge was formerly President of the Criminal Court; and after being present at this scene, I have no difficulty in believing what I hear from every one, that, in pronouncing sentence, he far surpassed every Judge whom the present time has witnessed, or of whom any memory survives. Had any gone before him, his equal in the " terrible graces" of judicial eloquence, it is not possible that he should soon have been forgotten. Feelings such as this man possesses, when expressed as he expresses them, produce an effect, of which it is not easy to say whether the impression may be likely to abide

longest in the bosoms of the good, or in those of the wicked.

As I came away through the crowd, I heard a pale, anxious-looking old man, who, I doubt not, had a cause in Court, whisper to himself—"God be thanked—there's one true GENTLEMAN at the head of them all."

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LETTER XXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE endeavoured to give you some notion of the present state of the Bar and Bench of Scotland—and I have done so, it may be, at greater length than you were prepared to expect. The individuals whom I have pourtrayed are all, however, men of strong and peculiar intellectual conformation; and therefore, without taking their station or functions into view, they cannot be unworthy of detaining, as individuals, some considerable portion of a traveller's attention. In our age, when so much oil is poured upon the whole surface of the ocean of life, that one's eye can, for the most part, see nothing but the smoothness and the flatness of uniformity, it is a most refreshing thing to come upon some

sequestered bay, where the breakers still gambol along the sands, and leap up against the rocks as they used to do. I fear, that ere long such luxury will be rarer even in Scotland than it now is; and, indeed, from all I hear, nothing can be more distinct and remarkable than the decrease in the *quantum* of it, which has occurred within the memory even of persons of my own time of life. The peculiarities, which appear to me so strong and singular in the present worthies of the Parliament-House, are treated with infinite disdain by my friend Mr Wastle, for example, who ridicules them as being only the last feeble gleanings of a field, which he himself remembers to have seen bending beneath the load of its original fertility.

The Bench of former days, he represents to have been a glorious harvest of character, and he deplores its present condition, as, with scarcely more than a single exception, one of utter and desolate barrenness. He himself remembers the Lord Justice-Clerk Macqueen of Braxfield, and he assures me, that, since his death, the whole exterior of judicial deportment has been quite altered—and I verily believe he thinks it has been altered for the worse, although there are

few of his opinions, probably, in which he is more singular than in this. Over the mantle-piece of his study, he has a very fine print of this old Judge, in his full robes of office, which he seldom looks at without taking occasion to introduce some strange grotesque anecdote of its original. If the resemblance of the picture be exact, as he says it is, old Braxfield must indeed have been a person, whom nobody could for an instant suppose to be one of the ordinary race of mortals. His face is broad, and the whole of its muscles appear to be firm and ponderous in their texture—you cannot suppose that such were ever nourished upon kickshaws—they have obviously borrowed their substance from a stint-less regimen of beef, brandy, and claret. His nose is set well into his forehead, as if Nature, in making him, had determined to grudge no expenditure of bone. His mouth wears a grin of ineffable sagacity, derision, and coarse uncon-trollable humour, all mingled with a copious allowance of sensuality. He must have had a most tyrannical quantity of Will, to judge from the way in which the wig sits on the top of his head; and nothing, indeed, can be more expres-sive of determined resolution than the glance of his light eyes beneath their pent-house brows,

although from the style in which they are set, one sees that they must have been accustomed to roll about, more than the eyes of stedfast and masculine men are commonly used to do. I should think it impossible that any joke could have been too coarse for this man's digestion; he must have experienced sensations of paradisiacal delight in reading Swift's description of the dalliance between Gulliver and Glumdalclitch. Even the Yahoos neighing by the riverside, must have been contemplated by him with the most unmingled suavity.—It is, by the way, a strange enough thing, how many of our great English authors seem to have united the utmost activity and shrewdness of intellect, and commanding thorough-going pertinacity of character, with an intolerable relish for all the coarser kinds of jests. The breed of such men was continued uninterruptedly from Echard to Swift and his brethren, and from Swift to Warburton and his brethren. These were all churchmen; had Braxfield been in the church, he must have been an author, and I doubt not he would have caught the falling mantle. I should like to see a portrait of the Cardinal, for whose edification Poggio compiled his *Facetiæ;* I dare say, there

Raeburn pinxit Wm D. Lizars Sculp.

BRAXFIELD.

must be a family likeness between it and this of Braxfield.

In the days, when the strong talents of this original gave him a great ascendency over the whole of his brethren of the coif, and a still greater over the gentlemen of the Bar, with many of whom he lived on terms of the most perfect familiarity—the style of private life generally adopted by the principal Judges and Advocates, and the style in which the public intercourse between these two sets of worthies was carried on, were both, as might be conjectured, as remote as possible from the decorum at present in fashion. Not that there was in either any licence productive of seriously bad effects to the people of the country, but there certainly must have been something as different as possible from anything that has been witnessed in our English Courts of Law for these many centuries past. Braxfield was very fond of cards and of claret, and it was no very unusual thing to see him take his seat upon the Bench, and some of his friends take their's at the Bar, within not a great many minutes of the termination of some tavern-scene of common devotion to either of these amusements. I have never heard, that any ex-

cesses committed by Braxfield had the least power to disturb him in his use of his faculties; but it is not to be supposed, that all his associates had heads as strong as his, nor to be wondered at, although many extraordinary things may have occurred on such trying occasions. I have heard of an Advocate coming to the Parliament-House fresh from the tavern, with one stocking white and the other black, and insisting upon addressing the Judges, exactly as ten minutes before he had been addressing the chairman of his debauch. One yet living is said to have maintained a stout battle on one occasion with the late President Dundas, (father to Lord Melville,) who refused to listen to him when he made his appearance in this condition. The check given to him seemed to have the effect of immediately restoring him to the possession of some moiety of his faculties; and, without being able to obtain one glimpse of the true reason which made the Judge reluctant to listen, or the true nature of the cause on which he conceived himself entitled to expatiate, he commenced a long and most eloquent harangue upon the dignity of the Faculty of Advocates, ending with a formal protest against the manner in which he had been used, and interspersing every paragraph with

copious repetitions of these words,—" It is our duty and our privilege to speak, my Lord; and it is your duty and your privilege to hear." Another Advocate, also yet living, is said, in a similar state of haziness, to have forgotten for which party, in a particular cause, he had been retained; and, to the unutterable amazement of the agent that had fee'd him, and the absolute horror of the poor client behind, to have uttered a long and fervent speech exactly in the teeth of the interests he had been hired to defend. Such was the zeal of his eloquence, that no whispered remonstrance from the rear—no tugging at his elbow, could stop him *in medio gurgite dicendi.* But just as he was about to sit down, the trembling writer put a slip of paper into his hands, with these plain words,—" You have pled for the wrong party;" whereupon, with an air of infinite composure, he resumed the thread of his oration, saying,—" Such, my Lord, is the statement which you will probably hear from my brother on the opposite side of this case. I shall now beg leave, in a very few words, to show your Lordship how utterly untenable are the principles, and how distorted are the facts, upon which this very specious statement has proceeded." And so he went once more over the same

ground, and did not take his seat till he had most energetically refuted himself from one end of his former pleading to another.

The race, however, of Judges, Advocates, and, of course, of Clients, among whom such things passed without remark or reproach, is now fast expiring. In spite of the authority of Blackstone, it seems to be generally believed now-a-days, that no man will study a point of law the better for drinking a bottle of port while he is engaged at his work. The uniform gravity of the Bench has communicated a suitable gravity to the Bar—the greater number of the practitioners at the Bar having, indeed, necessarily very much diminished the familiarity with which the Bench and the Bar were of old accustomed to treat each other; while the general change that has every where occurred in the mode of life, has almost entirely done away with that fashion of high conviviality in private, for which, of old, the members of the legal profession in this place were celebrated to a proverb. In short, it seems as if the business of all parties were now regarded in a much more serious point of view than formerly, and as if the practice of the Barristers, in particular, were every day getting more and more into a situation similar to that in

which the practice of their southern brethren has long been—a situation which, as you well know, admits of very little of such indulgences as these old Scotch Advocates seem to have considered quite in the light of indispensables.

There is still, however, one Judge upon the bench whom Wastle has a pleasure in bidding me look at, because in him, he assures me, may still be seen a genuine relic of the old school of Scottish Lawyers, and Scottish Judges. This old gentleman, who takes his title from an estate called Hermand, is of the Ayrshire family of the Fergusons of Kilkerran; the same family of which mention is frequently made in Burns's Poems, one of whose ancestors, indeed, was the original winner of the celebrated "Whistle of Worth," about which the famous song was written.

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Three joyous good fellows, with hearts clear of flaw;
Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law;
And trusty Glenriddel, so skill'd in old coins;
And gallant Sir Robert, deep read in old wines.

Craigdarroch began, with a tongue smooth as oil,
Desiring Glenriddel to yield up the spoil;
Or else he would muster the heads of the clan,
And once more in claret, try which was the man.

&c.

He is now, I suppose, with one exception, the senior Judge of the whole Court, for I see he sits immediately on the left hand of the President in the First Division. There is something so very striking in his appearance, that I wonder I did not take notice of it in an earlier letter. His face is quite thin and extenuated, and he has lost most of his teeth; but instead of taking away from the vivacity of his countenance, these very circumstances seem to me to have given it a degree of power, and fire of expression, which I have very rarely seen rivalled in the countenance of any young man whatever. The absence of the teeth has planted lines of furrows about the lower part of his face, which convey an idea of determination, and penetration too, that is not to be resisted; and the thin covering of flesh upon the bones of his cheeks, only gives additional effect to the fine, fresh, and healthful complexion which these still exhibit. As for his eyes, they are among the most powerful I have seen. While in a musing attitude, he keeps his eyelids well over them, and they peep out with a swimming sort of languor; but the moment he begins to speak, they dilate, and become full of animation, each gray iris flashing as keenly as a flint. His forehead is full of wrinkles, and his

eye-brows are luxuriant; and his voice has a hollow depth of tone about it, which all furnish a fine relief to the hot and choleric style in which he expresses himself, and, indeed, to the very lively way in which he seems to regard every circumstance of every case that is brought before him. Although very hasty and impatient at times in his temper and demeanour, and not over-scrupulous in regard to the limits of some of his sarcasms, this old Judge is a prodigious favourite with all classes who frequent the Courts, and, above all, with the Advocates, at whose expense most of his spleen effervesces. He is a capital lawyer, and he is the very soul of honour; and the goodness of his warm heart is so well understood, that not only is no offence taken with anything he says, but every new sarcasm he utters endears him more, even to the sufferer. As for the younger members of the profession, —when he goes a circuit, you may be sure, in whatever direction he moves, to meet with an extraordinary array of them in the train of Lord Hermand. His innocent peculiarities of manner afford an agreeable diversity to the surface of the causes carried on under his auspices, while the shrewdness and diligence of his intellect com-

pletely provide for the safety of their essential merits. And then, when the business of the Court is over, he is the very "prince of good-fellows, and king of old men;" and you are well aware what high delight all young men take in the company of their seniors, when these are pleased to enter, *bonâ fide*, into the spirit of their convivialities. He has an infinite fund of dry, caustic, original humour; and, in addition to this, he cannot fail to possess an endless store of anecdotes; so that it is no wonder his company should be so fascinating to the young jurisconsults. In him they are no doubt too happy to have an opportunity of seeing a noble living specimen of a very fine old school, which has now left little behind it but the tradition of its virtues, and its talents, and its pleasantries;—a school, the departure of many of whose peculiarities was perhaps rendered necessary in a great measure by the spirit of the age, but of which it may be suspected not a little has been allowed to expire, which might have been better worth preserving than much that has come in its place. It is not, I assure you, from Wastle alone that I hear lamentations over the decay of this antique spirit. It is sighed over by many that witnessed

its manifestations ere they had yet come to be rare, and will long be remembered with perhaps still greater affection by those who have seen the last of its relics in the person of this accomplished gentleman and excellent judge.

There would be no end of it, were I to begin telling you anecdotes about Lord Hermand. I hear a new one every day; for he alone furnishes half the materials of conversation to the young groupes of stove-school wits, of which I have already said a word or two in describing the Outer-House. There is one, however, which I must venture upon. When Guy Mannering came out, the Judge was so much delighted with the picture of the life of the old Scottish lawyers in that most charming novel, that he could talk of nothing else but Pleydell, Dandie, and the High Jinks, for many weeks. He usually carried one volume of the book about with him, and one morning, on the Bench, his love for it so completely got the better of him, that he lugged in the subject, head and shoulders, into the midst of a speech about some most dry point of law—nay, getting warmer every moment he spoke of it, he at last fairly plucked the volume from his pocket, and, in spite of all the remonstrances of all his brethren, insisted upon

reading aloud the whole passage for their edification. He went through the task with his wonted vivacity, gave great effect to every speech, and most appropriate expression to every joke; and when it was done, I suppose the Court would have no difficulty in confessing that they had very seldom been so well entertained. During the whole scene, Mr Walter Scott was present, seated, indeed, in his official capacity, close under the Judge.

Like almost all the old Scottish lawyers, Lord Hermand is no less keen in farming than in law, and in the enjoyment of good company. Formerly it was looked upon as quite inconsistent with the proper character of an Advocate, to say nothing of a Judge, to want some piece of land, the superintendence of the cultivation of which might afford an agreeable, no less than profitable relaxation, from the toils of the profession. In those days, it was understood that every lawyer spent the Saturday and Sunday of every week in the milder part of the year, not in Edinburgh, but at his farm, or villa;—and the way they went about this was sufficiently characteristic. In order that no time might be lost in town after the business of the Court on Saturday, the lawyers had established themselves in the pri-

THE TAYLOR

vilege of going to the Parliament-House, on that morning, in a style of dress, which must have afforded a most picturesque contrast to the strictly legal costume of full-dress black suits, in which, at that time, they made their appearance there on the other mornings of the week. They retained their gowns and wigs, but every other part of their equipment was in the very extreme of opposition to the usual integuments worn in company with these—riding-coats of all the splendid hues, not then as now abandoned to livery-servants, bright mazarine blue, pea-green, drummers' yellow, &c. &c., but always buckskin breeches, and top-boots and spurs. The steeds to be forthwith mounted by these embryo cavaliers, were meantime drawn up in regular lines or circles, under the direction of serving-men and cadies in the Parliament-Close; and no sooner did the Judges leave the Bench, than the whole squadron got rid of their incumbrances, and were off in a twinkling—some to their own estates—others to the estates of their friends—but every one to some place or other out of Edinburgh. Although all this parade has long since dropt into disuse and oblivion, the passion for farming has by no means deserted its hold of the Scotch lawyers. Among many others, as I

have said, Lord Hermand keeps up the old spirit with infinite zeal. It is not now in the power of professional people to leave Edinburgh at the end of every week; but the moment any session of the Court is over, and a few weeks of intermission are put in his power, he quits the city on the instant, and buries himself among his woods, and corn-fields, and cattle, till necessity compels him once more to exchange these for the "pulvis, strepitusque Romæ." Even in the city, there is in his dress and gait, a great deal that marks his Lordship's rural attachments and habits. His stockings are always of the true farmer's sort, with broad stripes alternately of black and white worsted—and his shoes are evidently intended for harder work than pacing the smooth granite of the streets of Edinburgh. I confess that my eye lingers with very singular delight, even upon these little traits in the appearance of one, that may well be considered, and therefore cannot fail to be honoured, as the last representative of so fine a class.

P. M.

LETTER XL.

TO THE SAME.

I THINK you will allow me no inconsiderable share of credit for the cordial manner in which I have lauded the excellencies of the Scottish Barristers, when I tell you, that those whom I have particularly described to you, are each and all of them Whigs—most of them fervent, nay, bigotted Whigs, or, as Dr Parr would say, *χυιγωτατοι*. Nor will it diminish the merits of my liberality, when I inform you, that the friend, under whose auspices my inspection of Edinburgh has been chiefly conducted, so far from regarding these eminent men with the same impartial eye of which I have made use, has well nigh persuaded himself into a thorough conviction, that their talents and attainments are most extravagantly over-rated in common opinion;

and has, moreover, omitted no opportunity of detracting from them in private, when he may have heard me expatiate upon their praises. There are only two exceptions to this—Mr Cranstoun and Mr Jeffrey. The former he cannot help admiring and loving for the beautifully classical style of his eloquence, and, indeed, of all his attainments; but I think it forms no small ingredient both in his love and admiration that Mr Cranstoun happens to be sprung from one of the greatest of the old Border families, and so, it may be supposed, to have been nourished in infancy with the same milk of romantic and chivalrous tradition, of which he himself imbibed so largely then, and with the influences of which even now his whole character and conversation are saturated and overflowing; for I have already said enough to satisfy you, that few men can quote the words of the poet with more propriety than Mr Wastle:

> "The Boy is Father of the Man,
> And I could wish my days to be
> Linked each to each in natural piety."

In regard to Jeffrey, his mode of thinking may perhaps appear something still more peculiar.

In the first place, indeed, the talents of this remarkable man are of such an order, that it is quite impossible a man of such talents as Mr Wastle should not admire them. The direction which has been given to these great talents, is a thing which my friend contemplates, and has long contemplated, "more in sorrow than in anger." While nobody can more abominate the scope and tendency of the Edinburgh Review, than he does, he is very far from being one of those who extend the feeling of aversion due to the work, from it to its principal conductor, or, indeed, who feel any difficulty in sympathizing with some part, at least, of those early feelings and circumstances, to which, in all probability, the worst things in the *conduct* of this celebrated Journal may be traced. He understands too much of poor human nature, to be an inexorable judge of the failings of a man, whose general power of intellect, and general rectitude of feeling and principle, he cannot but acknowledge. At times, it is true, on some new piece of provocation, his temper deserts him for a moment; but he soon recovers his tranquillity, and, in common, the tone wherein he speaks of Mr Jeffrey, is assuredly more nearly akin to that of

affectionate regret, than to that of impatient spleen, far less of settled aversion and dislike.

In truth, my old friend's views of literature are of so large a kind, and he has so much accustomed himself to trace the connection which subsists between the manifestations of mind in one age, and those in ages preceding and following, that it would be a very inconsistent thing, were he to concentrate any overwhelming portion of the wrath excited in his breast by any particular direction of intellectual forces, upon the head of any individual author whatever. Besides, were he inclined to heap the coals of his vengeance upon any one head, on account of the turn which literary and political criticism has taken in our days, most assuredly it would be on no living head that he would think of laying such a burden. He regards the Scotch philosophers of the present day, and among, or above the rest, Mr Jeffrey and the Edinburgh Reviewers, as the legitimate progeny of the sceptical philosophers of the last age; and although he is far from having any sympathy with the feelings which the whole style of that philosophy most eminently and powerfully tends to nourish, he cannot for a moment permit himself to lay at

the door of any one individual, a larger share in the common blame, than in strict, and yet in comprehensive justice, he thinks that individual ought to sustain. There is only one point of view in which Mr Wastle is accustomed to talk of Mr Jeffrey, as having initiated a bad and destructive species of mental exertion among his countrymen, or, at least, as having so far assisted the natural tendency towards some such species, as to have merited, in no inconsiderable measure, the dispraise, both present and future, with which the initiator of any such species must of necessity lay his account.

One of the greatest curses of a sceptical philosophy, is that, by leaving no object upon which the disinterested affections may exercise themselves, it is apt to cause the minds of mankind to be too exclusively taken up about the paltry gratifications of the personal feelings. When the true ornaments of our nature are forgotten, Pride and Vanity must become the arbiters of human life. All those periods of history, which are looked back upon as the most splendid, were times when men cared most about principles, and least about themselves; but when there are no longer any earnest notions about what is to

be loved or respected, even the public themselves become infected with the delirium of wishing to despise every thing, and literature is made to assume a tone of petulance, which corresponds with this absurd and paltry passion, exactly in the same proportion in which it does violence to all the nobler thoughts and more delightful feelings, for whose nourishment the divine field of literature was originally intended by the great Author of our being. It is chiefly in having led the way in giving this direction to the criticism, and through that to the whole literature of our day, that my friend feels himself constrained to regard Mr Jeffrey as having been the enemy of his country, and as meriting, in all succeeding generations, the displeasure of high-minded and generous Englishmen.

A man of genius, like Mr Jeffrey, must, indeed, have found it an easy matter to succeed in giving this turn to the public mind, among a people where all are readers, and so few are scholars, as is the case here in Scotland. Endowed by nature with a keen talent for sarcasm, nothing could be more easy for him than to fasten, with destructive effect of non-chalance, upon a work which had perhaps been composed with much earnestness of thought on the part of the author,

and with a most sincere anxiety after abstract truth, either of reasoning or of feeling. The object of the critic, however, is by no means to assist those, who read his critical lucubrations, to enter with more facility, or with better preparation, into the thoughts, or feelings, or truths, which his author endeavours to inculcate or illustrate. His object is merely to make the author look foolish; and he prostitutes his own fine talents, to enable the common herd of his readers to suppose themselves looking down from the vantage-ground of superior intellect, upon the poor, blundering, deluded poet or philosopher, who is the subject of review. It is a pitiable thing to contemplate the extent to which these evil fashions have been introduced among us, and I have no doubt that their introduction has been far more owing to the prostitution of the exquisite talents of Mr Jeffrey, than to any one cause whatever—neither do I at all doubt, after what I have seen of Scotland, that the power of the unholy spells has been far greatest and far most effectual in the immediate centre of their ring. It is probable, I think, that if Mr Jeffrey were at last to throw aside his character of Reviewer, and come before the world in a volume filled with continuous thoughts, and con-

tinuous feelings, originating in his own mind, he would find that the public he has so well trained, would be very apt to turn upon himself, and think themselves called upon to laugh, *more solito*, even at Mr Jeffrey himself, when deprived of the blue and yellow panoply under which they have for so many years been wont to regard his blows as irresistible, and himself as invulnerable.

The most vulgar blockhead who takes up and reads an article in the Edinburgh Review, imagines for the time that *he himself* is quizzing the man of genius, whose labours are there sported with. His opaque features are illuminated with triumph, and, holding the Journal fast in his hand, he pursues his fantastic victory to the last extremities. Month after month, or quarter after quarter, this most airy species of gratification is renewed, till, by long habit, our blockhead at last becomes *bonâ fide* satisfied and convinced, that he is quite superior to anything the age can produce. Now and then, to be sure, some passing event or circumstance may dart a momentary disturbance into the sanctuary of his self-complacency; but this will only make him long the more fervently for the next number of the Review, to convince him that he was all in

the right—to rekindle the fluttering lamp of his vanity, and make the *sanctum sanctorum* of his conceit as bright a thing as ever. In the mean time, to talk in the plain way the subject deserves, whatever share of understanding or feeling has been allowed him by nature, remains totally uncultivated in the mind of this reader of Reviews, and the faculties of his mind are absolutely lost and sunk in one blind brute wish to see everything levelled before his self-love. Of all human passions, that of vulgar and envious insolence is the one which least requires to be pampered and stimulated. It has been the moving principle in all the most disgusting scenes recorded in history. Caligula could not bear to see a man of a handsome person, or with a fine head of hair, in the Circus, or in the streets, and generally ordered such persons to be taken away and disfigured. During the direst periods of the French Revolution, the self-love of the people had been gratified with the downfall of so many kinds of distinction, that at last it grew to be a blind, infuriate, ungovernable impulse, which could not remain quiet, while any individual yet retained qualities which raised him above the multitude. Every species of merit was sure to be brought to the block, or hoisted

up to the *lanterne*, in this night of frenzy. The mad and ferocious scepticism also, which then prevailed, was only the principle of envy in disguise. It was envy which sought to extinguish every distinction between truth and falsehood, for fear it should be proved that any one thing was more excellent than any other. All was to be reduced to one dead level of uncertainty, and it was illiberal to consider a Greenlander as a less elegant or civilized person than an European. Such is the enthusiasm of the principle of popular self-love, when stimulated by a long series of indulgencies, and pushed to the last extremity of its slothful and unwieldy luxuriousness. That any man of genius should ever thoughtlessly or wantonly minister to it in literature, must be a source of the utmost sorrow and regret to every one who has a love, and a love of intelligence, for those qualities which most distinguish man from the brutes. Such a love (in spite of all his many little prejudices and peculiarities), glows no where with a more fervent flame than in the breast of my friend; and such are the sorrowful feelings with which he is accustomed to contemplate the main sin, which has disfigured and debased the splendid literary career of Mr Jeffrey.

That such, however, must inevitably be the course and tendency of popular criticism among a nation which had become at once very fond of scepticism, and very weary of learning, might, I think, have been foreseen long ago, (I by no means think it might have been effectually guarded against). To despise all the most divine emanations, of which the human mind can be made the vehicle, was a necessary appendage to that system which despises the records of Divine Wisdom itself, and which would erect, in their stead, a structure built upon no more stable foundations than those of the self sufficing, self-satisfied sagacity of the speculative intellect of man. It is a very easy thing to deny, that the doctrines of Religious Scepticism have been ever openly and broadly promulgated in the pages of the Edinburgh Review; but I think no candid person can entertain the slightest doubt, that the tendency of the whole work has been uniformly and essentially infidel. Unless it had been so, it must have been continually at variance with itself—it must have been but one string of discords from beginning to end. The whole tone of the jeering, sarcastic criticisms, with which it has been accustomed to salute the works of the more meditative and Christian au-

thors of the time, would be enough to reveal to us the true purpose it has in view, even although it had never contained a single word expressly and distinctly bearing upon the subject of Religion. The truth is, moreover, that, in the present state of the world, all Christians are well entitled to say, that "they that are not with us are against us;" and the coldness and silence of the Edinburgh Reviewers would have been enough to satisfy any good Christian what their tenets are, even although they had never broken upon their general rule of coldness and silence by one single audacious whisper of mockery. The negative would have been enough without the positive side of the proof; but, alas! those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, can have little difficulty in acknowledging, that the Edinburgh Reviewers have furnished their adversaries abundantly with both.

The system of political opinions, inculcated in the Edinburgh Review, is, in like manner, as I honestly think, admirably fitted to go hand in hand with a system of scepticism; but entirely irreconcilable with the notion of any fervent love and attachment for a religion, which is, above all other things, the religion of feeling. The politicians of this Review are men of great

shrewdness and sagacity, and many of them are men of much honesty; but it is impossible to suppose for a moment, that they are men either of very high or of very beautiful feeling. The whole of their views, in regard to the most important series of political convulsions which modern times have ever witnessed, are at variance with deep or refined feeling—they appeal uniformly and unhesitatingly to ideas, which stand exactly in the opposite extremity from those which men inspired with such feelings would have inculcated upon such occasions. To submit to Buonaparte, for example, and to refuse aid to the young patriotism of Spain—these were advices which could only have been seriously pressed upon the consideration of such a nation as England, by men who had banished from their own minds a very great part of that reverence for *Feeling* (as abstracted from mere questions of immediate and obvious utility), in the strength and nourishment of which the true old character of England, and of English politicians, grew. In a word, it is sufficiently manifest, that whatever faults the system of these Reviewers may have had, or may still have, it has at least had the merit of being a system uniform and consistent in itself. To destroy in

men's minds the lingering vestiges of love for a religion which is hated by self-love, because its mysteries baffle and confound the scrutiny of the self-complacent—to reduce the high feeling of patriotism to a principle of arithmetical calculation of utility—and to counteract, by a continued series of sarcastic and merry antidotes, the impression likely to be produced by works appealing to the graver and more mysterious feelings of the human heart—these are purposes which I would by no means say the leaders of this celebrated Journal ever contemplated calmly and leisurely, as the prime objects of their endeavours—but they are purposes which have been all alike firmly, although some of them perhaps unconsciously, pursued by them; and, indeed, to speak the plain truth of the whole matter, no one of which could have been firmly or effectually pursued, without being pursued in conjunction with the others. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I am happy to say, however, that from all I have now seen and heard of the state of Scotland, this Review, in spite of the fierce popularity it for some years enjoyed, is by no means likely to effect any such lasting, and, of course, miserable change in the feelings and character of

the people of Scotland, as might have been at one time expected by the Reviewers themselves, or dreaded by those who held sacred a very different set of feelings and principles, in all points, from those of which they have been the champions. In spite of the infidelity of the Edinburgh Review, (for I really feel no scruple in using the word broadly,) and, indeed, in spite of the sceptical tendency of the whole body of Scotch philosophy—the Scotch are still a religious people, and likely, I trust, very long to continue so. In spite of the mean views of general polity, illustrated and exemplified in the Edinburgh Review, and the still more offensive levity with which things nearer home have sometimes been treated by it, there is still an immense majority of the people of Scotland, who see things with the eyes, I do not say of sincere (for of no one do I question the sincerity,) but of enlightened patriots—men who understand the value of national experience, and venerate those feelings of loyalty and attachment to the more formal and external parts of the English constitution, with the general decay of which, I have very little doubt, the whole fabric to which they are fixed, would be found to have lost many of its firmest props, as well as of its finest ornaments.

In regard to literature, I think the success of the Edinburgh Review has been far more triumphant than in any other department of its exertions. Here it had to encounter fewer obstacles in the previous character and habits of the Scottish people; for the influence of the Sceptical Philosophy, introduced by the great men of the last age, had very much removed all feelings of intense admiration for any works besides their own, from among almost the only class of people who in Scotland are much interested about such subjects. The Scottish education, too, as you have already seen in part, is not such as to oppose any very formidable barrier of repugnant feelings against the encroachment of the spirit of degrading mockery. Ignorant in a great measure of the mighty spirits of antiquity, the Scottish student wants in truth the most powerful of all those feelings, which teach and prepare other men to regard with an eye of humility, as well as of admiration, those who in their own time seem to revive the greatness of the departed, and vindicate once more the innate greatness of our nature. It is, indeed, no uncommon thing to meet with men, calling themselves classical scholars, who seem to think it a part of their character as such to undervalue, on all occasions,

the exertions of contemporary genius. But these are only your empty race of solemn pretenders, who read particular books, only because few other people read them—and who, unable themselves to produce anything worthy of the attention of their own age, are glad to shelter their imbecility under the shadow of over-strained exclusive reverence for ages that have gone by. It is not necessary to suppose, that liberal and enlightened scholarship has anything in common with these reverend Tom Folios. The just and genuine effect of intimate acquaintance with the great authors of antiquity, is to make men love and reverence the great authors of their own time—the intellectual kinsmen and heirs of those whom they have so been wont to worship.

It is, indeed, a very deplorable thing to observe, in what an absurd state of ignorance the majority of educated people in Scotland have been persuaded to keep themselves, concerning much of the best and truest literature of their own age, as well as of the ages that have gone by. Among the Whigs in Edinburgh, above all, a stranger from the south is every day thunderstruck by some new mark of total and inconceivable ignorance concerning men and things, which, to every man of education with whom

he has conversed in any other town of Britain, are "familiar as household words." The degree to which the intellectual subjection of these people has been carried, is a thing of which I am quite sure you cannot possibly have the smallest suspicion. The Edinburgh Reviewers have not checked or impeded only the influence of particular authors among their countrymen; they have entirely prevented them from ever coming beyond the Tweed. They have willed them to be unknown, absolutely and literally unknown, and so are they at this moment. I do not on my conscience believe, that there is one Whig in Edinburgh to whom the name of my friend *Charles Lamb* would convey any distinct or definite idea. His John Woodville was ridiculed in the Edinburgh Review, and the effect of this paltry ridicule has been not only to prevent the Scotch from reading John Woodville, (a tragedy which, although every way worthy of Lamb's exquisite genius, wants very many of the popular charms in which some of his other pieces are rich to overflowing)—but almost to prevent them from remembering that such a person as Charles Lamb exists, at least to prevent them most effectually from ever having recourse for delight and instruction to volumes, wherein as

much delight and instruction may be found, as in any of similar size, which an English library possesses. Even the commanding, majestic intellect of Wordsworth has not been able to overcome the effect of the petty warfare kept up against it by a set of wits, one of whom only might have been expected to enter with some portion of intelligence into the spirit of so great and original a poet. To find fault with particular parts of Mr Wordsworth's poems, or with particular points in the Psychological system upon which the whole structure of his poetry is built, this might have been very well either for the Reviewers, or the readers of the Review. But the actual truth of the case is something very different, indeed, from this. The reading public of Edinburgh do not criticise Mr Wordsworth; they think him below their criticism; they know nothing about what he has done, or what he is likely to do. They think him a mere old sequestered hermit, eaten up with vanity and affectation, who publishes every now and then some absurd poem about a Washing-Tub, or a Leech-Gatherer, or a Little Grey Cloak. They do not know even the names of some of the finest poems our age has produced. They never heard of Ruth, or Michael, or the Bro-

thers, or Hart-Leap Well, or the Recollections of Infancy, or the Sonnets to Buonaparte. They do not know, that there is such a thing as a description of a Church-yard in the Excursion. Alas! how severely is their ignorance punished in itself. But after all, Mr Wordsworth can have no very great right to complain. The same people who despise, and are ignorant of him, despise also, and are ignorant of all the majestic poets the world has ever produced, with no exceptions beyond two or three great names, acquaintance with which has been forced upon them by circumstances entirely out of their controul. The fate of Homer, of Æschylus, of Dante—nay, of Milton—is his.

The spirit of this facetious and rejoicing ignorance has become so habitual to the Scotchmen of the present day, that even they who have thrown off all allegiance to the Edinburgh Review, cannot divest themselves of its influence. There is no work which has done so much to weaken the authority of the Edinburgh Review in such matters as Blackwood's Magazine; and yet I saw an article in that work the other day, in which it seemed to be made matter of congratulatory reflection, that "if Mr Coleridge should make his appearance suddenly among

any company of well-educated people on this side the Tweed, he would meet with some little difficulty in making them comprehend who he was."—What a fine idea for a Scottish critic to hug himself upon! How great is the blessing of a contented disposition!

P. M.

LETTER XLI.

TO THE SAME.

The Whigs are still lords of public opinion in Edinburgh, to an extent of which, before visiting Scotland, I could scarcely have formed any adequate notion. The Tories have all the political power, and have long had it; but from whatever cause (and I profess myself incapable of assigning any rational one), their power does not appear to have given them command of much sway over the general opinions, even of those that think with them regarding political matters. I confess that I, born and bred a Tory, and accustomed, in my part of the country, to see the principles I reverence supported by at least an equal share of talent, was not a little mortified by certain indications of faint-hearted-

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ness and absurd diffidence of themselves among the Scottish Tories, which met my eye ere I had been long in Edinburgh.

I am inclined, upon the whole, to attribute a good deal of this to the influence of the Edinburgh Review. That work was set on foot, and conducted for some years, with an astonishing degree of spirit; and although it never did anything to entitle it to much respect, either from English Scholars, or English Patriots, or English Christians, I can easily see how such a work, written by Scotchmen, and filled with all the national prejudices of Scotchmen, should have exerted a wonderful authority over the intellect of the city in which it was published. Very many of its faults (I mean those of the less serious kind—such as its faults in regard to literature and taste), were all adapted for the meridian of Scotland; and for a time, certainly the whole country was inclined to take a pride in its success. The *prestige* of the Edinburgh Review has now most undoubtedly vanished even there; but there still remains a shadow of it sufficient to invest its old conductors with a kind of authority over the minds of those, who once were disposed to consider them as infallible

judges, *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis;* and then the high eminence of some of these gentlemen in their profession of the law, gives them another kind of hold upon the great body of persons following that profession, which is every thing in Edinburgh; because the influence of those who follow it is not neutralized to any considerable extent by the presence of any great aristocracy, or of any great intellectual cultivation out of themselves. The Scotch are a people of talkers; and among such a people, it is wonderful how far the influence of any one person may be carried around and below him, by mere second—third—and fourth-hand babbling, all derived from one trivial source. I am not, however, of opinion, that this kind of work will go on much longer. Jeffrey has evidently got sick of the Review—and, indeed, when I look back to what he has done, and compare that with what he might have done, I think this is no wonder; Brougham has enough to do in Parliament—that is to say, he gives himself enough to do; and even there you well know what a charlatan kind of reputation he has—Horner is dead—Walter Scott has long since left them.—The Review is now a very sensible plain sort of book; in its best parts, cer-

tainly not rising above the British Review—and in its inferior parts, there is often a display of calm drivelling, much beyond what the British review itself would admit. And then there is no point—no wit—no joke—no spirit, nothing of the glee of young existence about it. It is a very dull book, more proper to read between sleeping and waking, among old, sober, cautious tradesmen, than to give any spring to the fancy or reason of the young, the active, and the intelligent. The secret will out ere long—viz. That the Edinburgh Reviewers have not been able to get any effectual recruits among the young people about them. There is no infusion of fresh blood into the veins of the Review. When one visits Edinburgh, where one cannot stir a step without stumbling over troops of confident, comfortable, glib, smart young Whigs, one is at a loss to understand the meaning of this dearth. One would suppose, that every ball-room and tavern overflowed with gay Edinburgh Reviewers. One hears a perpetual buzz about Jeffrey, Brougham, *the* Review, &c. &c., and would never doubt, that prime articles were undergoing the process of concoction in every corner. But, alas! the fact is, that the young Edinburgh

Whigs are a set of very stupid fellows, and the Review must wait long enough, if it is never to be resuscitated but by them.

They are really a very disagreeable set of pretenders—I mean those of them that do make any pretensions at all to literary character. They are very ill educated in general; they have no classical learning; few of them can construe two lines of any Latin poet; and as for Greek, they scarcely know which end of the book should be held to their noses. They have never studied any philosophy of any kind—unless attending a course of lectures on metaphysics, delivered by a man far too ingenious to be comprehended for above five sentences at a time, by persons of their acquirements and capacity, can be called studying philosophy. They know sometimes a little about chemistry and geology, to be sure; but these are studies in which the proficiency of mere amateurs can never be any great matter. They know a very little of English history and politics—enough to enable them to spin out a few half-hours of *blarney* in their debating societies. But, upon the whole, it may safely be asserted, that all they know, worthy of being known, upon any subject of general literature,

politics, or philosophy, is derived from the Edinburgh Review itself; and as they cannot do the Review any great service by giving it back its own materials, I conceive that this work is just in the act of falling a sacrifice to habits of superficial acquirement, and contented ignorance, which it was short-sighted enough to encourage, if not to create, in order to serve its own temporary purposes among the rising generation of Scotland.

One would imagine, however, that these young Whigs might have begun, long ere this time, to suspect somewhat of their own situation. They must be quite aware, that they have never written a single page in the Edinburgh Review, or that, if they have done so, their pages were universally looked upon as the mere lumber of the book; contrasting, too, their own unproductive petulance, with the laborious and fruitful early years of those whom they worship, and in whose walk they would fain be supposed to be following—it is difficult to understand how they happen to keep themselves so free from the qualms of conscious imbecility. Perhaps, after all, they are *au fond* less conceited than they appear to be; but certainly, to judge from externals, there ne-

ver was a more self-satisfied crew of young ignoramuses. After being let a little into their real character and attainments, I cannot say but that I derived a considerable degree of amusement from the contemplation of their manners. As for their talk, it is such utter drivelling, the moment they leave their text-books, (the moment they give over quoting,) that I must own I found no great entertainment in it. It is a pity to see a fine country, like Scotland, a country so rich in recollections of glorious antiquity, so rich in the monuments of genius, at this moment adorned with not a few full-grown living trees of immortal fruit—it is a pity to see such a country so devoid of promise for her future harvest. It is a pity to see her soil wasting on the nurture of this unproductive pestilential underwood, juices which, under better direction, might give breadth to the oak, and elevation to the pine.

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The respectable elder Whigs must, of a surety, feel very sore upon all this; for it is not to be supposed, that they can be quite so easily satisfied with these young *gregarii*, as the young *gregarii* are with themselves. I understand, accordingly, that nothing gives them so much visible delight, as the appearance of anything like a revival of talent among their troops. When a young Whig makes a tolerable speech at the Bar, or writes a tolerable law-paper, or adventures to confess himself author of a tolerable paragraph in a party print—in short, when he manifests any symptom of possessing better parts than the confessedly dull fellows around him, there is much rejoicing in the high places, a most remarkable crowing and clapping of wings in honour of the rising luminary. The young genius is fed and fattened for a season with puffs and praises; and, in consequence of that kind of dominion, or *prestige*, to which I have already alluded, the very Tories begin to contemplate him with a little awe and reverence, as a future formidable antagonist, with whom it may be as well to be upon some tolerable terms in private. Well—a year or two goes over his head, and the genius has not visibly improved

in any thing except conceit. He is now an established young Whig genius. If any situation becomes empty, which it would be convenient for him to fill, and if, notwithstanding of this, he is not promoted to it by those, whom, on every occasion, he makes the object of his ignorant abuse—this neglect of him is talked of by himself and his friends, as if it were virtually a neglect of *genius* in the abstract;—with so much readiness do these good people enter into the spirit of a personification. A Dutch painter could not typify ideal Beauty under a more clumsy and heavy shape, than they sometimes do Genius; nor are the languishing, coy, and conscious airs of some Venus over a *lust-huis* at Schedam, a whit more exquisite in their way, than the fat indignant fatuity of some of those neglected geniuses of Scotland.

So many of these geniuses, however, have now been puffed up, and pushed up to a little temporary reputation, and then sunk under their own weight into their own mud, that one should suppose the elevators must now be a little weary of exerting their mechanical powers in that way. Their situation is, indeed, almost as discouraging as that of Sisyphus, doomed for ever to

struggle in vain against the obstinate, or, as Homer calls it, the "*impudent*" *stone's alacrity in sinking*.

Αὖτις ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλινδετο λαας ἀναιδης.

P. M.

LETTER XLII.

TO THE SAME.

Dear Williams,

I trust, that among the many *literateurs* of Edinburgh, there will ere long be found some person to compose a full and detailed history of this city, considered as a great mart of literature. I do not know of any other instance, in the whole history of the world, of such a mart existing and flourishing in a place not the seat of a government, or residence of a court, or centre of any very great political interest. The only place which at all approaches to Edinburgh in this view is Weimar; for the residence of so small a prince as the Grand Duke can scarcely be considered as conferring anything like what we would understand by the character of a capital. But even there it can scarcely be said that any

great mart of literature exists, or indeed existed even at the time when Wieland, Schiller, and Goëthe lived together under the wing of the palace. Books were written there in abundance, and many books were nominally published there; but the true centre from which they were diffused over Germany was always Leipsick.

Till within these twenty years, I suppose there was no such thing in Edinburgh as the great trade of Publishing. Now and then some volume of sermons or so issued from the press of some Edinburgh typographer, and after lying for a year or two upon the counter of some of their booksellers, was dismissed into total oblivion, as it probably deserved to be. But of all the great literary men of the last age, who lived in Edinburgh, there was no one who ever thought of publishing his books in Edinburgh. The *trade* here never aspired to anything beyond forming a very humble appendage of understrappers to the *trade* of the Row. Even if the name of an Edinburgh bookseller did appear upon a title-page, that was only a compliment allowed him by the courtesy of the great London dealer, whose instrument and agent he was. Every thing was conducted by the Northern Bibliopoles in the same timid spirit of which this af-

fords a specimen. The dulness of their atmosphere was never enlivened by one breath of daring. They were all petty retailers, inhabiting snug shops, and making a little money in the most tedious and uniform way imaginable. As for risking the little money they did make upon any bold adventure, which might have tripled the sum, or swept it entirely away, this was a thing of which they had not the most remote conception. In short, in spite of Hume and Robertson, and the whole generation of lesser stars, who clustered around those great luminaries, the spirit of literary adventure had never approached the bibliopoles of Edinburgh. They never dreamed of making fortunes for themselves, far less of being the means of bestowing fortunes upon others, by carrying on operations in the large and splendid style of mercantile enterprize.

The only thing that could be looked upon as any invasion of this quiescent state of matters, was the appearance of the Mirrors, and some other works in the same style, or by the same hands, which were published in the shop of Mr Creech, then the Prince of the Edinburgh Trade—and which, of course, must have attracted no inconsiderable share of attention to him and his shop.

But this bibliopole was a very indifferent master of his trade, and wanted entirely the wit to take due advantage of "the goods the gods provided." He was himself a literary character, and he was always a great man in the magistracy of the city; and perhaps he would have thought it beneath his dignity to be a mere ordinary money-making bookseller. Not that he had any aversion to money-making; on the contrary, he was prodigiously fond of money, and indeed carried his love of it in many things to a ridiculous extent. But he had been trained in all the timid prejudices of the old Edinburgh school of booksellers, and not daring to make money in a bold and magnificent way, neither did he dare to run the risk of losing any part of what he had made. Had he possessed either the shrewdness or the spirit of some of his successors, there is no question he might have set on foot a fine race of rivalry among the literary men about him—a race, of which the ultimate gains would undoubtedly have been greatest to himself. But he was not aware of the powers of that great *momentum*, of which I have spoken on a former occasion. He never had the sense to perceive, that his true game lay in making high sweep-

stakes; and the consequence was, that nobody would take the trouble either of training or running for his courses. Not thinking, therefore, of entering into competition with the great booksellers of the metropolis, in regard to the stimulating of literary ardour by the weight of his purse, his ambition was to surpass all his own brethren in Edinburgh, in the attractions of his shop—which, if the account I hear be true, he must certainly have succeeded in rendering a very delightful lounge. He had been originally educated with a view to the Kirk, and had performed in his younger days a considerable part of the grand tour, in quality of governor to a young nobleman; and he was thus entitled to look upon himself as quite a different sort of person from the ordinary brothers of the trade. And then he could write paragraphs in the newspapers—verse or prose, witty or sentimental, as might suit the occasion. Above all, he was a wit and a story-teller of high eminence—one who sat every day "at good men's feasts," and delighted the company with the narration of humorous incidents, or rather the dramatic exposition of humorous characters. His stories were not many, and they were all regularly built, and formal

things in their way, but the man had a vein of pleasantry, the interest of which was not to be exhausted with the novelty of the tale, or even with the novelty of the particular expressions of which he made use in telling it. In short, Creech was one of the prime characters of the place, and it was a necessary thing to go to his shop every now and then, and see him there in his glory. I have seen a print of him, which represents him as a precise, intelligent-looking old gentleman, in stiff curls, and a nice suit of black, and having a great air of courtly suavity, mingled with not a little conceit and self-importance in his aspect. But Wastle, who knew him well, assures me that although this print gives his features very faithfully, and in all probability the air also in which he thought it fit and proper to sit to the painter, it gives not merely an inadequate, but a perfectly false idea of the real character of the man. The spirit of fun, he tells me, ran frolicking through his veins with the blood that filled them; and there was a roguish twinkle in his small, glittering gray eye, and a richness of jocularity in the wrinkles beneath and around them, that nothing could resist. It may be supposed that such a person would go through the ceremonial of a

bookseller's shop with something more than mere decorum.

At the time when the periodical works I have mentioned were in the course of publication, it was the custom of many of their chief supporters to go and breakfast with Creech, which they called attending Creech's levee—and his house was conveniently situated for this, being in the immediate vicinity of the Parliament-House, with which then, as now, all the literary characters of Edinburgh had a close connection. The pleasant conversation of the man, and his respectable appearance, and latterly, perhaps, his high civic dignities (for he was Lord Provost ere he died), all conspired in making Mr Creech a person of no ordinary importance, and in no ordinary request. The trade slumbered on year after year, in a quiet and respectable state of inaction, under the auspices of a man with whom nobody could enter upon any competition in so many important particulars, till, all of a sudden, there sprung up a new tribe of authors, who had tact enough to observe the absurdity of the way in which matters were going on, and forthwith there sprung up a new set of booksellers, who had the wit to understand that some great change was about to occur, and to prepare themselves *vi et ar-*

mis to take proper advantage of the commotion they foresaw. It is not easy to discover very accurately, how much of the merit of the change belongs to the new authors themselves, and how much of it belongs to the booksellers. They share the whole of it between them, and never assuredly was a change so remarkable, so suddenly, and yet so effectually produced. In one moment, Mr Creech was supplanted in his authority. Till the moment of his death, indeed, he was allowed to retain all manner of place, precedence, style, and dignity; but the essence of his kingship was gone—and the booksellers of Edinburgh, like the Mahratta Nabobs and Rajahs, owned the sway of one that bore not the name of Emperor.

The first manifestation of the new state of things was no less an occurrence than the appearance of the first Number of the Edinburgh Review—a thing which, wherever it might have occurred, must have been a matter of sufficient importance, and which appearing here, was enough not only to change the style of bookselling, and the whole ideas of booksellers, but to produce almost as great a revolution in minds not so immediately interested in the result of the phenomenon. The projectors of this Journal—

both writers and publishers I should imagine—were quite satisfied that nothing could be done without abundance of money. Whoever wrote for their book must submit to be paid for doing so, because they would have no distinction of persons. But, indeed, I never heard it suspected, that any one objected to receiving on the publication of an article, not only the honour of the thing, but a bunch of bank-notes into the bargain. If a man does not want money himself, he always knows abundance of people that do; and, in short, the root of all evil is a medicament, which requires little sweetening of the cup, either to the sick or the sound palate.

The prodigious impetus given to the *trade* of Edinburgh by the first application of this wonderful engine, has never since been allowed to lose any part of its energy. The Review, in the first place, of itself alone, has been sufficient to keep all fear of stagnation far enough from the scene in which it makes its appearance. And from the Review, as might well have been foreseen, a kindred impulse has been continually carried into every region of the literary world—but most of all into the heart of the literature and the notions of the literary men of Edinburgh. Very shortly after the commencement of the

MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S

Review, Mr Walter Scott began to be an author; and even without the benefit of its example, it is probable that he would have seen the propriety of adopting some similar course of procedure. However this might have been, ever since that time the Edinburgh Reviewers and Mr Walter Scott have between them furnished the most acceptable food for the reading public, both in and out of Scotland—but no doubt most exclusively and effectually in their own immediate neighbourhood; and both have always proceeded upon the principle of making the reading public pay handsomely for their gratification, through their fore-speakers, interpreters, and purveyors, the booksellers. It would be unfair, however, to omit mentioning what I firmly believe, that the efforts—even the joint efforts of these great authors, would not have availed to anything like the extent to which they have in reality reached, had they not been so fortunate as to meet with a degree of ardour and of tact, quite correspondent to their own, among the new race of booksellers, who had started into life along with themselves—above all, in Mr Constable, the original publisher of the Edinburgh Review—the publisher of most of Mr Scott's works, and, without doubt, by far

the greatest publisher Scotland ever has produced.

There is no doubt that this person is deserving of infinite credit for the share he has had in changing the whole aspect of Edinburgh, as a seat of literary merchandize—and, in truth, making it, instead of no literary mart at all, a greater one than almost any other city in Europe. What a singular contrast does the present state of Edinburgh, in regard to these matters, afford, when compared with what I have been endeavouring to describe as existing in the days of the Creeches! Instead of Scotch authors sending their works to be published by London booksellers, there is nothing more common now-a-days, than to hear of English authors sending down their books to Edinburgh, to be published in a city, than which Memphis or Palmyra could scarcely have appeared a more absurd place of publication to any English author thirty years ago. One that has not examined into the matter would scarcely be able to believe how large a proportion of the classical works of English literature, published in our age, have made their first appearance on the counters of the Edinburgh booksellers. But we all know the practical result of this, videlicet, that at this mo-

ment an Edinburgh title-page is better than almost any London one—and carries a greater authority along with it. For my part, if ever I should take it into my head to publish a book, I should most undoubtedly endeavour to get it published in Edinburgh. No book can be published there, and totally neglected. In so small a town, in spite of the quantity of books published in it, the publication of a new book is quite sure to attract the attention of some person, and if it has the least interest, to be talked of in company. If the book be a very interesting one in any way, its popularity extends with the most wonderful rapidity—and, ere a few days have elapsed, the snow-ball has grown so large, that it can be hurled to a distance with steady and certain assurance of hitting its mark. And, indeed, it is only in consequence of the frequency with which all this has occurred, that the imprimatur of an Edinburgh bookseller has come to be looked upon with so much habitual respect even in the south. This is surely a very remarkable change; and, for all that I can hear, both authors and booksellers are indebted for it to nothing more than the genuine sagacity of the one individual I have mentioned. I believe it should also be observed, that the establish-

ment of the press of Ballantyne, at the very same instant, almost, as the commencement of the Review, and the publication of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, helped to push on Scottish publications, or, indeed, Scottish literature. Before that press was set up in Edinburgh, I am told, nobody could venture a book to be printed in Edinburgh; afterwards, the Edinburgh press gained the same sort of celebrity as the Edinburgh title-pages.

One of the first things I do, whenever I come to any town, is to make a round of visits to all the principal booksellers' shops. I think they are by far the most amusing lounges in the world—picture-galleries and promenades they beat all to nothing. I am fond of all kinds of booksellers' shops; I scarcely know which I would prefer to have, were I to be confined to one only; but they are all to be had in the utmost perfection, or very nearly so, in Edinburgh. The booksellers themselves, in the first place, are a race of men, in regard to whom I have always felt a particular interest and curiosity. They are never for a moment confounded in my mind with any other class of shop-keepers or traffickers. Their merchandize is the noblest in the world; the wares to which they invite your

attention are not fineries for the back, or luxuries for the belly—the inward man is what they aspire to clothe and feed, and the food and raiment they offer are tempting things. They have whole shelves loaded with wisdom; and if you want wit, they have drawer-fulls of it at every corner. Go in grave or merry, sweet or sour, sentimental or sarcastic, there is no fear these cunning merchants can produce an article perfectly to your mind. It is impossible that this noble traffick should not communicate something of its essential nobility to those continually engaged in it. Can a man put his name on the title-page of Marmion, or Waverley, or Old Mortality, or Childe Harold, without gaining something from this distinction—I do not mean in his purse merely, but in his person? The supposition is absurd. Your bookseller, however ignorant he may be in many respects, always smells of the shop—and that which is a sarcasm, when said of any other man, is the highest of compliments when applied to him. In the way of his trade, moreover, he must continually come into contact with customers and employers, of a class quite superior to those who frequent any other shop in the street—yes, or warehouse or counting-house either. His talk is

not with the ignorant brute multitude, but with the elite of the *Genus Humanum,* the *Prima Virorum,* as Lucretius hath it—the wise and the witty ones of the earth. Instead of haggling over the counter with a smooth-faced Miss or Master, about some piece of foppish finery, or disputing with some rude, boisterous, coarse-minded dealer, about casks or tuns, or ship-loads of rum, sugar, or timber—the bibliopole retires into some sequestered little *speak-a-word* nook, and seats himself beside some serious and refined author, or more serious and more refined authoress, to decide or pronounce upon the merits of some infant tragedy, epic poem, sermon, or romance—or he takes his stand in the centre of his outer court, and publishes to the Gentiles, with a loud voice, the praises of some new publication gone forth, or about to go forth, from his penetralia, to the illumination of the world. What an air of intelligence is breathed upon this man, from the surface of the universe in which he moves! It is as impossible for a bookseller to be devoid of taste and knowledge—some flavour at least—as it is for a collier to have a white skin, or a miller to want one.

And then their claim to our respect is hereditary, as well as personal. "Noble of a noble

stem," they are representatives of worthies long since dead and sepulchred, whose names and achievements are still fresh in all men's recollection. What a world of associations are clustered about the bare name of any one of the great bibliopoles of days long since departed! Curll—whom Swift tormented—the audacious, hook-nosed Edmund Curll!—old Jacob Tonson, with his squint and his "two left legs"—and Lintot, with his orange-tawney waistcoat, and his gray ambling poney, who hinted to Mr Pope how easy a thing it would be for him to turn one of Horace's Odes, as they were walking their horses up a little hill on the Windsor road. How green is the memory of these old "Fathers of the Row!" They will flourish a hundred years hence as brightly as they do now, and not less brightly, because perhaps another groupe or two of descendants may have "climbed the ascent of that mysterious tower," and have left kindred names behind them to bourgeon with kindred blossoms.

But the interest one feels about the person of a bookseller, is not sustained by fantasies and associations alone. I should like to know where it is that a man picks up so much interesting information about most interesting subjects, in so

very easy a way as by lounging for half-an-hour in a bookseller's shop. It is in a city what the barber's shop is in a village—the centre and focus of all information concerning the affairs of men—the arena for all disputation—the stage for all display. It is there that the sybil Fame sits scattering her oracular leaves to all the winds of Heaven; but I cannot add with the poet,

> "Umile in tanta gloria,
> Coverta gia dello profetico nembo."

The bookseller is the confidant of his customers—he is the first to hear the rumour of the morning, and he watches it through all the stages of its swelling, till it bursts in the evening. He knows Mr ——'s opinion of Lord ——'s speech, sooner than any man in town. He has the best information upon all the *in futuros* of the world of letters; he has already had one or two peeps of the first canto of a poem not yet advertised—he has a proof-sheet of the next new novel in his pocket; and if you will but promise to be discreet, you may "walk backwards," or "walk up stairs for a moment," and he will shew it you. Are these things of no value? They may seem so to you among the green hills of Cardigan; but they are very much the reverse

to me among the dusty streets of London—or here in Edinburgh. I do love, from my soul, to catch even the droppings of the precious cup of knowledge.

To read books when they are upon every table, and to talk of them when nobody is silent about them, are rather vulgar accomplishments, and objects of vulgar ambition. I like to be beforehand with the world—I like both to see sooner and to see farther than my neighbours. While others are contented to sit in the pit, and gape and listen in wonder upon whatever is shewn or uttered, I cannot be satisfied unless I am permitted to go behind the scenes—to see the actors before they walk upon the stage, and examine the machinery of the thunder before its springs are set in motion.

In my next I shall introduce you to the Booksellers' shops of Edinburgh.

P. M.

LETTER XLIII.

TO THE SAME.

Dear Williams,

The importance of the Whigs in Edinburgh, and the Edinburgh Review, added to the great enterprize and extensive general business of Mr Constable, have, as might have been expected, rendered the shop of this bookseller by far the most busy scene in the Bibliopolic world of the North. It is situated in the High-street, in the midst of the Old Town, where, indeed, the greater part of the Edinburgh Booksellers are still to be found lingering (as the majority of their London brethren also do,) in the neighbourhood of the same old haunts to which long custom has attached their predilections. On entering, one sees a place by no means answering, either in point of dimensions, or in point of ornament, to the no-

tion one might have been apt to form of the shop from which so many mighty works are every day issuing—a low dusky chamber, inhabited by a few clerks, and lined with an assortment of unbound books and stationery—entirely devoid of all those luxurious attractions of sofas and sofa-tables, and books of prints, &c. &c., which one meets with in the superb nursery of the Quarterly Review in Albemarle-Street. The Bookseller himself is seldom to be seen in this part of his premises; he prefers to sit in a chamber immediately above, where he can proceed in his own work without being disturbed by the incessant cackle of the young Whigs who lounge below; and where few casual visitors are admitted to enter his presence, except the more important members of the great Whig corporation—Reviewers either in *esse*, or, at least, supposed to be so in *posse*—contributors to the Supplement of the Encyclopædia Britannica—and the more obscure editors and supporters of the innumerable and more obscure periodical works, of which Mr Constable is the publisher. The bookseller is himself a good-looking man, apparently about forty—very fat in his person, but with a face with good lines, and a fine healthy

complexion. He is one of the most jolly-looking members of the trade I ever saw; and moreover, one of the most pleasing and courtly in his address. One thing that is remarkable about him, and indeed very distinguishingly so, is—his total want of that sort of critical jabber, of which most of his brethren are so profuse, and of which custom has rendered me rather fond than otherwise. Mr Constable is too much of a bookseller, to think it at all necessary that he should appear to be knowing in the merits of books. His business is to publish books, and to sell them; he leaves the work of examining them before they are published, and criticizing them afterwards, to others, who have more leisure on their hands than he has. One sees in a moment that he has reduced his business to a most strictly business-like regularity of system; and that of this the usual cant of book-shop disquisition forms no part—like a great wholesale merchant, who does not by any means think it necessary to be the taster of his own wines. I am of opinion, that this may, perhaps, be in the end the wisest course a great publisher can pursue. Here, at least, is one sufficiently striking instance of its success.

If one be inclined, however, for an elegant shop, and abundance of gossip, it is only necessary to cross the street, and enter the shop of Messrs Manners and Miller—the true lounging-place of the blue-stockings, and literary beau-monde of the Northern metropolis. Nothing, indeed, can be more inviting than the external appearance of this shop, or more amusing, if one is in the proper lounging humour, than the scene of elegant trifling which is exhibited within. At the door you are received by one or other of the partners, probably the second mentioned, who has perhaps been handing some fine lady to her carriage, or is engaged in conversation with some fine gentleman, about to leave the shop after his daily half-hour's visit. You are then conducted through a light and spacious anti-room, full of clerks and apprentices, and adorned with a few busts and prints, into the back-shop, which is a perfect bijou. Its walls are covered with all the most elegant books in fashionable request, arrayed in the most luxurious clothing of Turkey and Russia leather, red, blue, and green—and protected by glass folding-doors, from the intrusion even of the little dust which might be supposed to threaten

them, in a place kept so delicately trim. The grate exhibits either a fine blazing fire, or, in its place, a beautiful fresh bush of hawthorn, stuck all over with roses and lilies, as gay as a Maypole. The centre of the room is occupied by a table, covered with the Magazines and Reviews of the month, the papers of the day, the last books of Voyages and Travels, and innumerable books of scenery—those beautiful books which transport one's eye in a moment into the heart of Savoy or Italy—or that still more beautiful one, which presents us with exquisite representations of the old castles and romantic skies of Scotland, over whose forms and hues of native majesty, a new atmosphere of magical interest has just been diffused by the poetical pencil of Turner—Thomson—or Williams. Upon the leaves of these books, or such as these, a groupe of the most elegant young ladies and gentlemen of the place may probably be seen feasting, or seeming to feast their eyes; while encomiums due to their beauties are mingled up in the same whisper with compliments still more interesting to beauties, no doubt, still more divine. In one corner, perhaps, some haughty blue-stocking, with a volume of Campbell's Speci-

mens, or Dr Clarke's Scandinavia, or the last number of the Edinburgh Review, or Blackwood's Magazine in her hand, may be observed launching ever and anon a look of ineffable disdain upon the less intellectual occupation of her neighbours, and then returning with a new knitting of her brows to her own *paulo majora*. In the midst of all this, the bookseller himself moves about, doing the honours of the place, with the same unwearied gallantry and politeness—now mingling his smiles with those of the triflers, and now listening with earnest civility to the dissertation, commendatory or reprobatory, of the more philosophic fair. One sees, in a moment, that this is not a great publishing shop; such weighty and laborious business would put to flight all the loves and graces that hover in the perfumed atmosphere of the place. A novel, or a volume of pathetic sermons, or pretty poems, might be tolerated, but that is the utmost. To select the most delicate viands from the great feast of the Cadells, Murrays, Baldwins, Constables, and Blackwoods, and arrange and dispose them so as to excite the delicate appetite of the fine fastidious few—such is the object and such the art of the great Hatchard of Edinburgh. This shop seems to have a prodigious

flow of retail business, and is, no doubt, not less lucrative to the bookseller than delightful to his guests. Mr Miller is the successor of Provost Creech, in something of his wit, and many of his stories, and in all his love of good cheer and good humour, and may certainly be looked upon as the favourite bibliopole of almost all but the writers of books. He ought, however, to look to his dignity, for I can perceive that he is likely to have ere long a dangerous rival in a more juvenile bookseller, whose shop is almost close to his own—Mr Peter Hill. This young gentleman inhabits at present a long and dreary shop, where it is impossible to imagine any groupe of fine ladies or gentlemen could assemble, *selon les regles;* but he talks of removing to the New Town, and hints, not obscurely, that Mr Miller may soon see all the elegancies of his *boudoir* thrown into shade by an equally elegant *salon*.

Mr Hill and you, my good fellow, would hit it to a hair; for, while his forenoons are past in the most sedulous attention to the business of a flourishing concern, his genteel and agreeable manners have made him a universal favourite with everybody, so that one frequently meets with him at evening parties, when "it is good

to be merry and wise;" and I declare to you, that you never heard a sweeter pipe. Our friend Tom Moore himself is no whit his superior.

As for shops of old books, classics, black-letter, foreign literature, and the like, I was never in any great town which possesses so few of them as this. It might indeed be guessed, that her riches in this way would not be great, after the account I have given you of the state of scholarship among the *literateurs* of the North. There is, however, one shop of this sort, which might cut a very respectable figure, even in places where attainments of another kind are more in request; and I confess I have visited this shop more frequently, and with more pleasure, than any of its more fashionable neighbours in Edinburgh. It is situated, as it ought to be, in the immediate vicinity of the College, and consequently quite out of the way of all the fashionable promenades and lounges; but, indeed, for anything I have seen, it is not much frequented even by the young gentlemen of the University. The daily visitors of Mr Laing, (for that is the name of its proprietor,) seem rather to be a few scattered individuals of various classes and professions, among whom, in spite of the prevailing spirit and customs of

the place, some love of classical learning is still found to linger—retired clergymen and the like, who make no great noise in the world, and, indeed, are scarcely known to exist by the most part even of the literary people of Edinburgh. The shop, notwithstanding, is a remarkably neat and comfortable one, and even a lady might lounge in it, without having her eye offended, or her gown soiled. It consists of two apartments, which are both completely furnished with valuable editions of old authors, and I assure you, the antique vellum bindings, or oak boards of these ponderous folios, are a very refreshing sight to me, after visiting the gaudy and brilliant stores of such a shop as that I have just described. Mr Laing himself is a quiet, sedate-looking old gentleman, who, although he has contrived to make very rich in his business, has still the air of being somewhat dissatisfied, that so much more attention should be paid by his fellow-citizens to the flimsy novelties of the day, than to the solid and substantial articles which his magazine displays. But his son is the chief enthusiast—indeed, he is by far the most genuine specimen of the true old-fashioned bibliopole that I ever saw exhibited in the person of a young man. My friend Wastle has a pro-

digious liking for him, which originated, I believe, in their once meeting casually in Rotterdam, and travelling together over most part of Holland in the Treckschuyt—and, indeed, this circumstance has been expressly alluded to by Wastle in one of his poems. Here Wastle commonly spends one or two hours every week he is in Edinburgh, turning over, in company with his young friend, all the Alduses, and Elzevirs, and Wynkin de Wordes, and Caxtons in the collection, nor does he often leave the shop, without being tempted to take some little specimen of its treasures home with him. I also, although my days of bibliomania are long since over, have been occasionally induced to transgress my self-denying rule. I have picked up various curious things at a pretty cheap rate—and one book in particular, of which I shall beg your acceptance when we meet; but at present I won't tell you what it is. David Laing is still a very young man; but Wastle tells me, (and so far as I have had occasion to see, he is quite correct in doing so,) that he possesses a truly wonderful degree of skill and knowledge in almost all departments of bibliography. Since Lunn's death, he says, he does not think there is any of the booksellers in London superior to him

in this way, and he often advises him to transfer the shop and all its treasures thither. But I suppose Mr Laing has very good reasons not to be in a hurry in adopting any such advice. He publishes a catalogue almost every year, and thus carries on a very extensive trade with all parts of the island. Besides, miserable as is the general condition of old learning in Scotland, there is still, I suppose, abundant occasion for one bookseller of this kind; and, I believe, he has no rival in the whole country. For my part, if I lived in Edinburgh, I would go to his shop every now and then, were it only to be put so much in mind of the happy hours we used to spend together long ago at Mr Parker's.

This old gentleman and his son are distinguished by their classical taste, in regard to other things besides books—and, among the rest, in regard to wines—a subject touching which it is fully more easy for them to excite the sympathy of the knowing ones of Edinburgh. They give an annual dinner to Wastle, and he carried me with him the other day to one of these anniversaries. I have seldom seen a more luxurious display. We had claret of the most exquisite La-Fitte flavour, which foamed in the glass like

MAHARAJA

the cream of straw-berries, and went down as cool as the nectar of Olympus. David and Wastle entertained us with an infinite variety of stories about George Buchanan, the Admirable Crichtonius, and all the more forgotten heroes of the Deliciæ Poetarum Scotorum. What precise share of the pleasure might be due to the claret, and what to their stories, I shall not venture to enquire; but I have rarely spent an evening more pleasantly.

P. M.

P. S. They are also very curious in sherry.

LETTER XLIV.

TO THE SAME.

Dear David,

The only great lounging book-shop in the New Town of Edinburgh is Mr Blackwood's. The prejudice in favour of sticking by the Old Town was so strong among the gentlemen of the trade, that when this bookseller intimated a few years ago his purpose of removing to the New, his ruin was immediately prophesied by not a few of his sagacious brethren. He persisted, however, in his intentions, and speedily took possession of a large and airy suite of rooms in Prince's-Street, which had formerly been occupied by a notable confectioner, and whose threshhold was therefore familiar enough to all the frequenters of that superb promenade. There it was that this enterprizing bibliopole hoisted his standard, and prepared at once for action. Stimulated, I suppose, by the example and success of John Murray, whose agent he is, he determined to make, if possible, Prince's-Street to the High-Street, what the other has made Albemarle-Street to the Row.

This shop is situated very near my hotel; so Mr Wastle carried me into it almost immediately after my arrival in Edinburgh; indeed, I asked him to do so, for the noise made even in London about the Chaldee MS., and some other things in the Magazine, had given me some curiosity to see the intrepid publisher of these things, and the probable scene of their concoction. Wastle has contributed a variety of poems, chiefly ludicrous, to the pages of the New Miscellany; so that he is of course a mighty favourite with the proprietor, and I could not have made my introduction under better auspices than his.

The length of vista presented to one on entering the shop, has a very imposing effect; for it is carried back, room after room, through various gradations of light and shadow, till the eye cannot trace distinctly the outline of any object in the furthest distance. First, there is as usual a spacious place set apart for retail-business, and a numerous detachment of young clerks and apprentices, to whose management that important department of the concern is intrusted. Then you have an elegant oval saloon, lighted from the roof, where various groupes of loungers and literary dilettanti are engaged in looking at, or criticizing among themselves, the publi-

cations just arrived by that day's coach from town. In such critical colloquies, the voice of the bookseller himself may ever and anon be heard mingling the broad and unadulterated notes of its Auld Reekie music; for, unless occupied in the recesses of the premises with some other business, it is here that he has his usual station. He is a nimble active-looking man of middle age, and moves about from one corner to another with great alacrity, and apparently under the influence of high animal spirits. His complexion is very sanguineous, but nothing can be more intelligent, keen, and sagacious, than the expression of the whole physiognomy; above all, the gray eyes and eye-brows as full of loco-motion as those of Catalani. The remarks he makes are, in general, extremely acute—much more so, indeed, than those of any member of the trade I ever heard speak upon such topics. The shrewdness and decision of the man can, however, stand in need of no testimony beyond what his own conduct has afforded—above all, in the establishment of his Magazine (the conception of which, I am assured, was entirely his own), and the subsequent energy with which he has supported it through every variety of good and evil fortune. It would be very unfair to lay upon his shoulders any portion of the blame

which particular parts of his book may have deserved; but it is impossible to deny that he is well entitled to a large share in whatever merit may be supposed to be due to the erection of a work, founded, in the main, upon good principles, both political and religious, in a city where a work upon such principles must have been more wanted, and, at the same time, more difficult, than in any other with which I am acquainted.

After I had been introduced in due form, and we had stood for about a couple of minutes in this place, the bookseller drew Mr Wastle aside, and a whispering conversation commenced between them, in the course of which, although I had no intention of being a listener, I could not avoid noticing that my own name was frequently mentioned. On the conclusion of it, Mr Blackwood approached me with a look of tenfold kindness, and requested me to walk with him into the interior of his premises—all of which, he was pleased to add, he was desirous of shewing to me. I of course agreed, and followed him through various turnings and windings into a very small closet, furnished with nothing but a pair of chairs and a writing-table. We had no sooner arrived in this place, which, by the way, had certainly something

very mysterious in its aspect, than Mr Blackwood began at once with these words,—"Well, Dr Morris, have you seen our last Number? Is it not perfectly glorious?—My stars! Doctor! there is nothing equal to it. We are beating the Reviews all to nothing—and, as to the other Magazines, they are such utter trash"—— To this I replied shortly, that I had seen and been very much amused with the last number of his Magazine—intimating, however, by tone of voice, as well as of look, that I was by no means prepared to carry my admiration quite to the height he seemed to think reasonable and due. He observed nothing of this, however; or if he did, did not choose I should see that it was so.—"Dr Morris!" said he, "you must really be a contributor—We've a set of wild fellows about us; we are much in want of a few sensible intelligent writers, like you, sir, to counterbalance them—and then what a fine field you would have in Wales—quite untouched—a perfect Potosi. But any thing you like, sir—only do contribute. It is a shame for any man that dislikes whiggery and infidelity not to assist us. Do give us an article, Doctor."

Such an appeal was not easily to be resisted; so, before coming away, I promised, *boná fide*, to comply with his request. I should be happy to

do so, indeed, were it only to please my friend Wastle, who, although by no means a bigotted admirer of Mr Blackwood's Magazine, is resolved to support it as far as he conveniently can, —merely and simply, because it opposes, on all occasions, what he calls the vile spirit of the Edinburgh Review. Besides, from every thing I have since seen or heard of Mr Blackwood, I cannot but feel a most friendly disposition towards him. He has borne, without shrinking, much shameful abuse, heaped upon him by the lower members of the political party whose great organ his Magazine has so boldly, and, in general, so justly, attacked. But the public seem to be a good deal disgusted with the treatment he has received—a pretty strong re-action has been created—so that, while one hears his name occasionally pronounced contemptuously by some paltry Whig, the better class of the Whigs themselves mention him in very different terms, and the general conviction throughout this literary city is, that he is a clever, zealous, honest man, who has been made to answer occasionally for faults not his own, and that he possesses the essential qualities both of a bookseller and a publisher, in a degree, perhaps, not at all inferior to the most formidable of his rivals. Over and above all this, I must say, that I am fond of using my

pen—witness my unconscionable epistles, David, past, present, and to come—and have long been seeking for an opportunity to try my hand in some of the periodical journals. In the present day, I look upon periodical writing as by far the most agreeable species of authorship. When a man sits down to write a history or a dissertation—to fill an octavo or quarto with Politics, Morals, Metaphysics, Theology, Physics, Physic, or Belles-Lettres, he writes only for a particular class of readers, and his book is bought only by a few of that particular class. But the happy man who is permitted to fill a sheet, or a half-sheet, of a monthly or quarterly journal with his lucubrations, is sure of coming into the hands of a vast number of persons more than he has any strict or even feasible claim upon, either from the subject-matter or execution of his work. The sharp and comical criticisms of one man are purchased by people who abhor the very name of wit, because they are stitched under the same cover with ponderous masses of political economy, or foggy divinity, or statistics, or law, or algebra, more fitted for their plain, or would-be plain understandings; while, on the other hand, young ladies and gentlemen, who conceive the whole sum and substance of human accomplishment to consist in being able

to gabble a little about new novels and poems, are compelled to become the proprietors of so many quires of lumber *per quarter*, in order that they may not be left in ignorance of the last merry things uttered by Mr Jeffrey, or Mr Southey, or Mr Gifford, or Sir James Macintosh. It is thus—for that also should be taken into consideration—that these works *pay* so much better than any others; or rather that, with the exception of a few very popular poems, or novels, or sermons, (which are sold off in a week or two,) they are the only works that pay at all. One might suppose, that as all the best authors of our day are extremely willing to pocket as much as they can by their productions, the periodical works, all the world over, would be filled with the very best materials that living writers could furnish; and, in our country, there is no question a near approach to this has been made in the case of the two great Reviews, which, after all that has been said against them, must still be admitted to be, in the main, the most amusing and instructive works our time produces.

But even these might be vastly improved, were it not for the vanity or ambition—(according to Gall and Spurzheim, the two principles are quite the same)—of some of our chief writers,

who cannot, in spite of all their love for lucre, entirely divest themselves of the old-fashioned ideas they imbibed in their youth, about the propriety and dignity of coming out, every now and then, with large tomes produced by one brain, and bearing one name on the title-page. In time, however, there is reason to hope people may become sensible of the absurdity of such antediluvian notions, and consent, for their own sakes, to keep up all their best things for the periodicals. Indeed, I see no reason to doubt that this will be the case long before the National Bankruptcy occurs.

I, for my part, have such a horror at the idea of writing a whole book, and putting my Christian and surname at the beginning of it, that I am quite sure I should never be an author while I live, were these necessary conditions to the dignity. I could not endure to hear it whispered when I might come into a room—"Dr Morris—who is Dr Morris?"—"O, 'tis the same Dr Morris that wrote the book on so and so—that was cut up so and so"—or even "that was praised so and so, in such and such a Review."—I want nerves for this. I rejoice in the privilege of writing and printing *incognito*—'tis the finest discovery of our age, for it was never practis-

ed to any extent in any age preceding. There is no question that the other way of doing must have its own *agrémens,* when one happens to practise it with great success—but even so, I think the mask is better on the whole, and I think it looks as if the whole world were likely to be ere long of my opinion. I don't suppose the author of Waverley will ever think of confessing himself—were I in his place, I am sure I never should. What fine persuasive words are those which Venus makes use of in the Æneid, when she proposes to the Trojan hero to wrap his approach to the city with a copious garniture of cloud—*multo nebulæ amictu.*

> "Cernere ne quis te, neu quis contingere posset,
> Molirive moram, aut veniendi poscere causas."

There could be no resisting of such arguments, even without the additional persuasiveness of a "*rosea cervix,*" and "*ambrosiæ comæ divinum vertice odorem spirantes.*"

Mr Wastle came into the *sanctum sanctorum* before the bookseller and his new author had quite made an end of their confabulation. He forthwith asked Mr Blackwood for his *gem,* upon which a silver snuff-box was produced, and I immediately recollected the inimitable description in the Chaldee MS., which had given rise

to the expression used by my friend. Nothing, I think, can be more exquisite.—"And he took from under his girdle a gem of curious workmanship, of silver, made by the hand of a cunning artificer, and overlaid within with pure gold; and he took from thence something in colour like unto the dust of the earth, or the ashes that remain of a furnace, and he snuffed it up like the east wind, and returned the gem again into its place." But I must reserve the famous Chaldee MS., and the character of this far-famed Magazine, for another letter.

On coming away, Wastle reminded me that I had said I would dine with him at any tavern he pleased, and proposed that we should honour with our company a house in the immediate neighbourhood of Mr Blackwood's shop, and frequently alluded to in his Magazine, as the great haunt of its wits. Indeed, it is one of the localities taken notice of by the archaic jeu-d'esprit I have just quoted—"as thou lookest to the road of Gabriel and the *land of Ambrose*," which last proper name is that of the keeper of this tavern. Wastle had often supped, but never dined here before, so that it was somewhat of an experiment; but our reception was such as to make us by no means repent of it. We had an excellent dinner, and port so superb, that my

friend called it quite a *discovery*. I took particular notice of the salmon, which mine host assured us came from the Tay, but which I could scarcely have believed to be the real product of that river, unless Wastle had confirmed the statement, and added, by way of explanation, that the Tay salmon one sees in London loses at least half of its flavour, in consequence of its being transported thither in ice. Here, it is certainly the finest salmon one meets with. The fish from the Tweed are quite poor in comparison. The fact is, I suppose, that before any river can nourish salmon into their full perfection, it must flow through a long tract of rich country. The finest salmon in the whole world are those of the Thames and the Severn—those of the Rhine and the Loire come next; but, in spite of more exquisite cookery, their inferiority is still quite apparent. We made ourselves very happy in this snug little tavern till nine o'clock, when we adjourned to Oman's, and concluded the evening with a little Al Echam, and a cup of coffee.

The street, or lane, in which Ambrose's tavern is situated, derives its name of Gabriel's Road, from a horrible murder which was committed there a great number of years ago. Any

occurrence of that sort seems to make a prodigiously lasting impression on the minds of the Scotch people. You remember *Muschat's Cairn* in the Heart of Mid-Lothian—I think *Gabriel's Road* is a more shocking name. *Cairn* is too fine a word to be coupled with the idea of a vulgar murder. But they both sound horribly enough. The story of Gabriel, however, is one that ought to be remembered, for it is one of the most striking illustrations I have ever met with, of the effects of puritanical superstition in destroying the moral feelings, when carried to the extreme in former days not uncommon in Scotland. Gabriel was a Preacher or Licentiate of the Kirk, employed as domestic tutor in a gentleman's family in Edinburgh, where he had for pupils two fine boys of eight or ten years of age. The tutor entertained, it seems, some partiality for the Abigail of the children's mother, and it so happened, that one of his pupils observed him kiss the girl one day in passing through an anti-room, where she was sitting. The little fellow carried this interesting piece of intelligence to his brother, and both of them mentioned it by way of a good joke to their mother the same evening. Whether the lady had dropped some hint of what she had heard to her maid, or whether she had done so to the Preacher himself,

P. M. Del.t W. Wastle Sculp.t

MR. JEFFREY.

I have not learned ; but so it was, that he found he had been discovered, and by what means also. The idea of having been detected in such a trivial trespass, was enough to poison for ever the spirit of this juvenile presbyterian—his whole soul became filled with the blackest demons of rage, and he resolved to sacrifice to his indignation the instruments of what he conceived to be so deadly a disgrace. It was Sunday, and after going to church as usual with his pupils, he led them out to walk in the country—for the ground on which the New Town of Edinburgh now stands, was then considered as *the country* by the people of Edinburgh. After passing calmly, to all appearance, through several of the green fields, which have now become streets and squares, he came to a place more lonely than the rest, and there drawing a large clasp-knife from his pocket, he at once stabbed the elder of his pupils to the heart. The younger boy gazed on him for a moment, and then fled with shrieks of terror ; but the murderer pursued with the bloody knife in his hand, and slew him also as soon as he was overtaken. The whole of this shocking scene was observed distinctly from the Old Town, by innumerable crowds of people, who were near enough to see every motion of

the murderer, and hear the cries of the infants, although the deep ravine between them and the place of blood, was far more than sufficient to prevent any possibility of rescue. The tutor sat down upon the spot, immediately after having concluded his butchery, as if in a stupor of despair and madness, and was only roused to his recollection by the touch of the hands that seized him.

It so happened, that the Magistrates of the City were assembled together in their Council-Room, waiting till it should be time for them to walk to church in procession (as is their custom), when the crowd drew near with their captive. The horror of the multitude was communicated to them, along with their intelligence, and they ordered the wretch to be brought at once into their presence. It is an old law in Scotland, that when a murderer is caught in the very act of guilt (or, as they call it, *red-hand,*) he may be immediately executed, without any formality or delay. Never surely could a more fitting occasion be found for carrying this old law into effect. Gabriel was hanged within an hour after the deed was done, the red knife being suspended from his neck, and the blood of the innocents scarcely dry upon his fingers.

Such is the terrible story from which the name of Gabriel's Road is derived. I fear the spirit from which these horrors sprung, is not yet entirely extinct in Scotland; but on this I shall have a better opportunity to make a few remarks, when I come to speak at length of the present religious condition of the nation—the most important of all objects to every liberal traveller in every country—but to none so important as to the traveller who visits Scotland, and studies the people of Scotland, as they deserve to be studied.

Ever your affectionate friend,

P. M.

LETTER XLV.

TO THE SAME.

My dear David Williams,

I take no offence whatever with anything you have said, nor do I think it at all likely that I shall ever take any serious offence from anything you can say. The truth is, that you are looking upon all these matters in far too serious a point of view. I care nothing about this book, of which you have taken up so evil a report; but I insist upon it, that you spend one or two evenings in looking over the copy I send you, before you give me any more of your solemn advices and expostulations. When I have given you time to do this, I shall write to you at greater length, and tell you my own mind all about the matter.

Ever your's,

P. M.

LETTER XLVI.

TO THE SAME.

I PRESUME you have now done as I requested; and if so, I have no doubt you are prepared to listen to what I have to say with a more philosophic temper. The prejudices you had taken up without seeing the book, have, I make no question, made unto themselves wings and passed away—at least the most serious of them,—and you are probably quite as capable of taking a calm and impartial view of the affair as I myself am; for as to my allowing any partiality for Wastle seriously to warp my judgment concerning a literary Journal, in which he sometimes writes—this is, I assure you, a most absurd suspicion of your's—but *transeat cum aliis.*

The history of Blackwood's Magazine is very singular in itself, and I think must long conti-

nue to form an important epoch in the literary history of Scotland—above all of Edinburgh. The time of its first appearance was happily chosen, just when the decline of that intense and overmastering interest, formerly attracted to the Edinburgh Review, had fairly begun to be not only felt, but acknowledged on every hand; and had it not appeared at that particular time, it is probable that something, not widely different in spirit and purpose, must have ere long come forth; for there had already been formed in Scotland a considerable body of rebels to the long undisputed tyrannical sway of Mr Jeffrey and his friends; and it was necessary that the sentiments of this class should find some vehicle of convenient expression. In short, the diet of levity and sarcastic indifference, which had so long formed the stable nourishment of Scottish intellect, had by repetition lost, to not a few palates, the charming poignancy of its original flavour; and besides, the total failure of all the political prophecies of the Whig wits, and, indeed, the triumphant practical refutation given by the great events of the preceding years to all their enunciations of political principles, had, without doubt, tended very powerfully to throw discredit

upon their opinions in regard to other matters. The Whigs themselves, indeed, were by no means inclined to acknowledge that the sceptre of their rulers had lost any portion of its power; but the continuance of their own firm allegiance was by no means sufficient to prevent this from being actually the case; for in preceding times, the authority of the critical sceptre had been acknowledged by Scottish Tories, no less humbly than by Scottish Whigs; and it was too natural for these last to suspect, at this alarming crisis, that the former would now think themselves in possession of a favourable opportunity for throwing off a sway, which had always with them rested much more on the potency of fear than on that of love.

The subjection of the antecedent period had, indeed, been as melancholy and profound, as anything ever exemplified within the leaden circle of an eastern despot's domination. There was, for a long time, no more thought among the Scottish reading public of questioning the divine right, by which Mr Jeffrey and his associates ruled over the whole realms of criticism, than there is in China of pulling down the cousin-german of the Moon, and all his bowing court of Mandarins. In many respects, there is

no doubt the Scotch had been infinitely indebted to this government—it had done much to refine and polish their ideas and manners—it had given them an air of intelligence and breeding, to which they had been strangers before its erection among them. But these advantages were not of so deep a nature, as to fix themselves with any very lasting sway in the souls of the wiser and better part of the people. They were counterbalanced in the eyes of the simpler and less meditative classes, by many circumstances of obvious character and obvious importance too, (after these had once been able to fix attention;)—and those who were accustomed or able to reflect in a more serious and profound manner upon the condition of their country, could not, I suppose, be blind to another circumstance equally true, and far more generally and enduringly important than any other—namely, that the influence acquired by the Edinburgh Reviewers over the associations of the great majority of Scottish minds, was not an influence accompanied with any views of philosophy calculated to ennoble human nature, or with any genial or productive spirit of thought likely to draw out the genius and intellect of

the country in which their Review was published.

The national mind of any country is not likely to be elicited advantageously, if the reins of public association are managed with all the petulance of eager self-love, caring little for the investigation of any principle, or the expansion of any feeling, provided it can in the meantime assume to itself the appearance of superior smartness and cleverness. Love, which "hopeth all things and believeth all things," is the true inventive principle. It is the true caloric, which calls out every sort of vegetation from the soil, which contains in its bosom the sleeping germs of national genius. Now, the Edinburgh Review cared very little for what might be done, or might be hoped to be done, provided it could exercise a despotic authority in deciding on the merits of what was done. Nobody could ever regard this work as a great fostering-mother of the infant manifestations of intellectual and imaginative power. It was always sufficiently plain, that in all things its chief object was to support the credit of its own appearance. It praised only where praise was extorted—and it never praised even the highest efforts of contemporary genius, in the spirit of true and genuine earnestness,

which might have been becoming ;—Even in the temple of their adoration the Reviewers still carried with them the swell and strut of their own worldly vanity ; and, in the midst of their most fervent devotions, it was always easy to see that they conceived themselves to be conferring honour on the object of their worship. They never spoke out of the fullness of the heart, in praising any one of our great living poets, the majesty of whose genius would have been quite enough to take away all ideas, except those of prostrate respect, from the breasts of critics to whom any portion of the true mantle of an Aristotle, or a Longinus, or a Quinctilian, might have descended. Looking back now after the lapse of several years, to their accounts of many of these poems, (such as Mr Scott's, for example,) which have now become so deeply interwoven with the most serious part of every man's mind, it is quite wonderful to find in what a light and trivial vein the first notices of them had been presented to the public by the Edinburgh Reviewers. Till very lately, it may be doubted if there was any one critique on a contemporary poet, in the pages of the Edinburgh Review, which did not more or less partake of the nature of a quiz. Surely this was very poor work, and

such was the view of it which a very large proportion, even of the Scottish public, had at last begun to entertain.

These faults—faults thus at last beginning to be seen by a considerable number of the old readers and admirers of the Edinburgh Review, —seem to have been at the bottom of the aversion which the writers who established Blackwood's Magazine had against it; but their quarrel also included a very just disapprobation of the unpatriotic mode of considering the political events of the times adopted all along by the Review, and also of its occasional irreligious mockeries, borrowed from the French philosophy, or *soi-disante* philosophy of the last age. Their great object seems to have been to break up the monopoly of influence which had long been possessed by a set of persons, guilty of perverting, in so many ways, talents on all hands acknowledged to be great. And had they gone about the execution of their design with as much wisdom and good feeling as would seem to have attended the conception of it, I have little doubt they would very soon have procured a mighty host of readers to go along with them in all their conclusions. But the persons who are supposed to have taken the lead in directing the

new forces, wanted many of those qualities which were most necessary to ensure success to their endeavours; and they possessed others, which, although in themselves admirably qualified for enabling them to conduct their projects successfully, tended, in the manner in which they made use of them, to throw many unnecessary obstacles in their way. In short, they were very young, or very inexperienced men, who, although passionately fond of literature, and even well skilled in many of its finest branches, were by no means accurately acquainted with the structure and practice of literature, as it exists at this day in Britain. They saw well enough in what respects the literature of the day had been allowed to fall into a condition unworthy of the old spirit of English literature, but they do not seem to have seen with equal perspicacity, in how many points the literary practice of our time has been improved, beyond that of the ages preceding. With their minds full of love and veneration for the great serious authors of all nations and ages, and especially so for all the master-spirits of their own time, they appear to have entertained also a most singular warmth of sympathy for all the extravagancies, caprices, and madnesses of frolic humour that

were ever in any age embodied in the vehicle of fine language, or made use of as the instruments of powerful intellect. Their veneration for intellectual power was too great—exactly as that of the Edinburgh Reviewers was too small: and they allowed this feeling, in the main a most excellent one, to shut from their eyes a thousand circumstances, both of agreement and disagreement, between the spirit of their own age, and the spirit of times antecedent,—all of which most especially and most imperatively demanded the attention of the Institutors of a new Literary Journal having such objects and such pretensions as theirs. In short, they were too fresh from their studies to have been able to look back upon any particular period of literary history, with the proper degree of coolness and calmness. They admired rather too indiscriminately, and whatever they admired they never thought it could be improper or unsafe for them to imitate. They approached the lists of literary warfare with the spirit at bottom of true knights; but they had come from the woods and the cloisters, and not from the cities and haunts of active men, and they had armed themselves, in addition to their weapons of the right temper, with many other weapons of offence,

which, although sanctioned in former times by the practice of the heroes in whose repositories they had found them rusting, had now become utterly exploded, and were regarded, and justly regarded, as entirely unjustifiable and disgraceful by all who surveyed, with modern eyes, the arena of their modern exertions.

But even for this, there might have been some little excuse, had their weapons, such as they were, been employed only in behalf of the noble cause they had espoused. Such, however, was by no means the case. These dangerous instruments were too powerful to be swayed easily by the hot hands into which they had come; and—as if intoxicated with the delight of feeling themselves furnished with unwonted accoutrements, and a spacious field—the new combatants began at once to toss their darts about them in directions quite foreign to those they should have had in view. They stained, in plain language, the beginning of their career with the sins of many wanton and malicious personal satires, not immediately subservient to the inculcation of any particular set of principles whatever, and in their necessary and ultimate tendencies quite hostile to the noble and generous set of principles, religious and political, as well

as literary, of which these persons had professed themselves to be the champions. Since that time, experience and reflection seem to have taught them many lessons concerning the folly and vice of this part of their giddy career—but they have still not a little to learn before they can be made fully sensible of the true nature of some of their trespasses. And, in the meantime, after having been guilty of offences so manifest, they can have no right to complain, although those who witnessed their offences are slow in being made sensible to the sincerity of their repentance. They must take the consequences of their own audacious folly, in committing, or permitting, such gross outrages upon all good feeling—and submit to go through the full penalties of the Purgatory of Suspicion, before they hope to approach that Paradise of perfect Forgiveness, of which, among many other points of its beatitude, Danté has taken care to say, with a sagacity peculiar to himself,

"Molto è licito là, che quì non lece."

Great, however, as was the impropriety (to use the slightest phrase) of many of these early satires in this Magazine, I by no means would have you to believe (as you seem to have done),

that the outcry raised against the Magazine among the Whigs of Edinburgh, and re-echoed by some of the minor oracles of the same party in London, was really produced by any just and pure feeling of indignation against them. The eagerness manifested by the enemies of the new Journal to add, by all possible exaggerations and misrepresentations, to the already large enough sum of its iniquities, betrayed that there was at the bottom of their zeal a very different set of causes—causes which, although in their own breasts far more effectual than any others, did not so well admit of being propounded in a way likely to captivate the popular assent. The true source of the clamour raised against by far the greater number of the articles in Blackwood's Magazine, was not their personality (for of this, very many of those which excited most noise appear to me to be most perfectly guiltless), but the nature of the spirit of thought which these articles exhibited—which was indeed, at bottom, utterly at variance with the old current upon which Mr Constable's lawyers had, for so many years, floated with so little expenditure of reflection, and managed their helms with so little risk of being perplexed by any variety in the tides. As one instance of this, I may refer you

to the Essay on the Periodical Criticism of Great Britain, which appeared towards the beginning of the Magazine, under the mask of a translation from some German author. This essay, as Wastle informs me, was for many months a perfect text-book for vituperations of the work in which it made its appearance. And yet, when you have read it, I have no doubt you will agree with me in thinking that it is an able and excellent performance, which could only have excited so much clamour because it is too true and too effective. It was the first regular attack made with any striking degree of power of thought, or even with any display of nervous and manly language, against all the chief sins of the Edinburgh Review. It is written in a style of such perfect courtesy and good breeding to all parties, and it touches, with so much impartiality and independence, upon the quite opposite faults of the Quarterly Review, that I am mistaken if the Edinburgh Reviewers, now that they have had more experience of being attacked, would not be ashamed to say anything against any attack written as this was. They could not refrain from crying out at the time, for it was the first caustic that had ever touched the centre of their sore; and indeed, however silent they might

have been, there is no question it could not have been applied with so firm a hand without making them wince to the quick.

Of the many subsequent attacks on the Review, some were equally well written, but few so free of the faults with which the Magazine has been too often chargeable. The Letter to Dr Chalmers, for example, was an improper and unwarrantable expostulation, when considered as addressed to that eminent individual, and no doubt attached far greater blame to his conduct in occasionally assisting the Edinburgh Review, than the bulk of mankind are ever likely to think it deserved; it is probable, however, that the idea of writing such a letter might have been taken up rashly—merely as furnishing an occasion for more fully discussing the mode in which Religion had been treated in the Edinburgh Review, and without any wish to give pain to Dr Chalmers, who is indeed treated, throughout the whole of it, in a style of great personal respect. But if some apology might be offered for this letter, the other letter of the same series, addressed to Mr Playfair, could certainly admit of none. This was, undoubtedly, one of the worst of all the offences of the Magazine. I cannot well express the pain with which I perused it a

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second time, after having seen the venerable person to whom it is addressed, and become acquainted with the true character of his mind and dispositions. It was calculated to bring about no useful object whatever; it was a cruel interference with the private history of a most unassuming and modest man of genius; and the force of declamation with which much of it is composed, can be regarded in no other light than an aggravation of the offence of composing it at all. Another letter, addressed about the same time to Lord Byron on the publication of his Beppo, was meanly and stupidly represented as a malignant attack on this great poet; whereas it is, in truth, filled, from beginning to end, with marks of the most devout admiration for his genius, and bears every appearance of having been written with the sincere desire to preserve that majestic genius from being degraded, by wasting its inspirations on themes of an immoral or unworthy description. It is, to my mind, a complete proof, that this Magazine was vituperated not so much from good principle as from selfish spleen, that almost as great handle was made of this energetic letter, which, I doubt not, Lord Byron would peruse with any emotions rather than those of anger, as of the very

offensive address to Professor Playfair—about which there cannot possibly be two opinions among people of just feeling.

The attack upon Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, which appeared in one of the first Numbers of the Magazine, was another sad offence—perhaps even worse than this on Mr Playfair; because it was not merely the pushing to extravagance and illiberality a right and proper subject of reprehension, but a total departure from the principles of the Magazine itself, and almost, I think, a specimen of the very worst kind of spirit, which the Magazine professed to be fighting against, in the Edinburgh Review. This is, indeed, the only one of all the various sins of this Magazine for which I am at a loss to discover—not an apology—but a motive. If there be any man of grand and original genius alive at this moment in Europe, such a man is Mr Coleridge. A certain rambling discursive style of writing, and a habit of mixing up, with ideas of great originality, the products of extensive observation and meditation, others of a very fantastic and mystical sort, borrowed from Fichté and the other German philosophers, with whose works he is familiar—these things have been sufficient to prevent his prose writings from be-

coming popular beyond a certain narrow class of readers, who, when they see marks of great power, can never be persuaded to treat lightly the works in which these appear, with whatever less attractive matter they may chance to be intermingled. Yet even his prose writings are at this moment furnishing most valuable materials to people who know, better than the author himself does, the art of writing for the British public; and it is impossible that they should much longer continue to be neglected, as they now are. But the poetry of Coleridge, in order to be understood perfectly and admired profoundly, requires no peculiar habits of mind beyond those which all intelligent readers of poetry ought to have, and must have. Adopting much of the same psychological system which lies at the root of all the poetry of Wordsworth, and expressing, on all occasions, his reverence for the sublime intellect which Wordsworth has devoted to the illustration of this system, Coleridge himself has abstained from bringing his psychological notions forward in his poetry in the same open and uncourting way exemplified by his friend; and, what is of far more importance in the present view of the subject, he has adopted nothing of his friend's peculiar notions concerning poetical diction. He

is perhaps the most splendid versifier of our age; he is certainly, to my ear, without exception the most musical. Nothing can surpass the melodious richness of words which he heaps around his images—images which are neither glaring in themselves, nor set forth in any glaring framework of incident, but which are always affecting to the very verge of tears, because they have all been formed and nourished in the recesses of one of the most deeply musing spirits that ever breathed forth its inspirations in the majestic language of England. Who that ever read his poem of *Genevieve* can doubt this? That poem is known to all readers of poetry, although comparatively few of them are aware that it is the work of Coleridge. His love-poetry is, throughout, the finest that has been produced in England since the days of Shakspeare and the old dramatists. Lord Byron represents the passion of love with a power and fervour every way worthy of his genius, but he does not seem to understand the nature of the feeling which these old English poets called by the name of Love. His love is entirely oriental: the love of haughty warriors reposing on the bosom of humble slaves, swallowed up in the unquestioning potency of a passion, imbibed in, and from the very sense of,

their perpetual inferiority. The old dramatists and Coleridge regard women in a way that implies far more reverence for them—far deeper insight into the true grandeur of their gentleness. I do not think there is any poet in the world who ever touched so truly the mystery of the passion as he has done in *Genevieve*, and in that other exquisite poem (I forget its name,) where he speaks of

——" Her voice,
Her voice, that, *even in its mirthful mood,*
Hath made me wish to steal away and weep."

Now, what could be the object proposed by a writer, in a work professing to hold the principles of this Magazine, when he adventured to descend from the elevation of his habitual reverence, and minister among the many paltry priests who sacrifice at the shrine of paltry self-love, by endeavouring to heap new ridicule upon the character of a great genius, who had already been made so much the butt of ignorant ridicule as Mr Coleridge? I profess myself unable to solve the mystery of the motive. The result is bad—and, in truth, very pitiable.

I think very differently indeed, concerning the series of attacks on Hunt, Hazlitt, and the

whole of that pestiferous crew, on which Blackwood's Magazine has had the merit of fixing for ever that most just and expressive of all nicknames, "*The Cockney School.*" If the Magazine had done nothing more than giving these creatures the everlasting distinction of this happy name, it would have deserved eternally well of the literature of our age. The extreme contempt and loathing felt by the castigators for the subjects of their most just chastisement, was, indeed, able to make them overstep very absurdly the proper limits of critical language; and this has, no doubt, tended in some measure to weaken the effect of the attack, because it has probably prevented it from being carried on and concluded as it deserved to be. But, indeed, the name alone is enough—it has already been adopted by the Quarterly, and almost all the minor Reviews, and the whole regiment of the Magazines—and from these it has been carried into the vocabulary of half the Newspaper editors in the united kingdom. Such a fire of contumely, kept up on this most conceited knot of superficial coxcombs, cannot fail to produce ere long the salutary effect of entirely silencing their penny trumpets of sedition and blasphemy—to say nothing of their worthless poetry. They are

all entirely made up of affectation, and the pompous stiffness of their fine attitudes merely required to be pointed out by one sharp finger, in order to be laughed at by all that looked upon them.—*The Cockney School!* It would have required the shoulders of so many Demigods to have been able to toss off such a load of ignominy; but on theirs the burden sticks like the robe of the Satyr, and they cannot get quit of the incumbrance, except by giving themselves the coup-de-grace. Sentence of dumbness has gone forth against them, and ere long they must be executioners of it themselves. They are by far the vilest vermin that ever dared to creep upon the hem of the majestic garment of the English muse. They have not one idea that is worthy of the name of English, in the whole circle of their minds. They talk for ever about Chaucer, and Shakespeare, and Spenser—but they know no more about the spirit of these divine beings, than the poor printer's devils, whose fingers are wearied with setting together the types, which are degraded by being made the vehicles of their crude and contumelious fantasies. And yet with what an ineffable air of satisfaction these fellows speak of themselves as

likely to go down to posterity among the great authors of England! It is almost a pity to destroy so excellent a joke. Unless the salt of the nick-name they have got preserve them, they cannot possibly last twenty years in the recollection even of the Cockneys.

The faults of this Magazine have been very great; the worst of them wanton and useless departures from the set of principles, and outrages upon the set of feelings, it has all along professed to hold sacred. These faults, however, I am inclined to attribute to nothing so much as to a total carelessness, in regard to the management of the work. The idea seems to have been, that a Magazine is not bound to maintain any one set of opinions, in regard to any one set of objects, throughout the whole of its pages; but that it was quite sufficient to insert in every Number, a certain number of articles, full of the traces of proper feeling and thinking, and to fill up the rest with anything that would amuse any class of Magazine-readers, without the least concern about their agreement or disagreement with the main and presiding spirit of the book. Perhaps, after all, the truth may be, that the whole work was set about without any plan of any

kind; and that therefore, although the contributions of the chief writers, being throughout animated with the warmth of a particular set of feelings and principles, have been enough to create something like a presiding spirit, the contradictory effect of other contributions was never considered, even by these persons, in the light of any serious infringement upon any serious rule. How all this may have been I know not; but, to my mind, the effect of the whole is such as I have endeavoured to depict to you. I look on the book as a sad farrago; but I think the valuable part of the materials is so great, as to furnish no inconsiderable apology for the mixture of baser things. And yet how much better might it have been, had the same talents been exerted upon some more regular system, and, above all, under some more regular feeling of responsibility.

This last, indeed, is an idea that seems never to have disturbed, for a moment, the minds of the writers of this Magazine. It is not known who the editor is—I do not see how that secret can ever be divulged, as things now stand—but my friend Wastle tells me that he is an obscure man, almost continually confined to his apart-

ment by rheumatism, whose labours extend to little more than correcting proof-sheets, and drawing up plans, which are mostly executed by other people. The efficient supporters, however, are well known—or, at least, universally suspected—although nobody seems to be able to say, with the least approach to certainty, what particular articles are written by any one individual among them. I have as yet seen little of any of them; but now that I have agreed to be one of their coadjutors in a small way, I shall, no doubt, have opportunities of being better acquainted with them. Wastle has promised to ask several of them to dine with him some day next week—and, as usual, I shall have my eyes and ears about me.

The history of this Magazine may be considered in quite a different point of view—as the struggle, namely, of two rival booksellers, striving for their respective shares in the profits of periodical publications. Of the respective conduct of the persons who, in this point of view, might come to be taken into consideration, I cannot pretend to judge in any way; but I think it looks as if nothing could be more fair than that some division should take place here, as every where else, in that sort of spoil. Had

the Magazine not appeared as it did, it is probable that the natural tendency, which a thriving trade has to split into competitions, would soon have given rise to something of the same sort among the bibliopoles of Edinburgh. As for the great bookseller against whom Mr Blackwood seemed to have opened the war with so much vigour, I think he has shewn less skilfulness than might have been expected in the forces which he has brought to act immediately in defence of the position attacked. I do not speak of the Edinburgh Review, for it is well able to take care of itself; but of the Scots Magazine, one of the oldest works of the kind in existence, which Mr Constable has been endeavouring to revive, so as to render it a fit competitor with the new, and, indeed, audaciously original Magazine I have been talking about. It seems as if nothing could be more dull, trite, and heavy, than the bulk of this ancient work. The only enlivening things in it are a few articles now and then by Hazlitt, and a few better still by a gay writer of the name of Reynolds. But these are quite lost in the dulness all about them. In themselves, being all genuine gems of the Cockney School, they are of little intrinsic value, and their glitter only makes the lead in which they

are set look more heavy than ever. Mr Reynolds, however, is certainly a very promising writer, and might surely do better things than copying the Cockneys.

There is another circumstance about the writers of Blackwood's Magazine, which cannot miss to catch your attention, viz. that they have never been in any degree studious of keeping up the imposing stateliness and guarded self-importance, usually made so much of by critics and reviewers. They have presented themselves in all the different aspects which lively fancy and good-humoured caprice could suggest. They assume new disguises every month, and have a whole regiment of fictitious personages into whose mouths they have thrown so much matter, that they almost begin to be regarded as real personages by the readers of the Magazine; for, to ask whether such or such a name be a real or a fictitious one, is always some trouble—and trouble is of all things what Magazine-readers in general hold in most cordial detestation. Had these young writers been more reserved, they might perhaps have enjoyed more consideration than they now do among the foolish part of the public. Probably the spirit in which they have written has been but

imperfectly understood by the majority. As Mr Jeffrey says of the French Revolution—it is not easy to judge of the real scope of many movements and events, till a good while after they have taken place.

Ever your's,

P. M.

LETTER XLVII.

TO THE SAME.

Another of the great morning lounges has its seat in a shop, the character of which would not at first sight lead one to expect any such thing—a clothier's shop, namely, occupied by a father and son, both of the name of David Bridges. The cause and centre of the attraction, however, is entirely lodged in the person of the junior member of the firm, an active, intelligent, and warm-hearted fellow, who has a prodigious love for the Fine Arts, and lives on familiar terms with all the artists of Edinburgh; and around whom, in consequence of these circumstances, the whole connoisseurs and connoisseurship of the North have by degrees become clustered and concentrated, like the meeting of the red and yellow stripes in the back of a tartan jacket.

This shop is situated in the High-Street, not above a couple of hundred yards from the house of my friend Wastle, who, as might be supposed, is one of its most frequent visitors. I had not been long in Edinburgh before I began to make some enquiries concerning the state of art in Scotland, and Wastle immediately conducted me to this dilettanti lounge, saying, that here was the only place where I might be furnished with every means of satisfying all my curiosity. On entering, one finds a very neat and tasteful-looking shop, well stocked with all the tempting diversities of broad-cloth and bombazeens, silk stockings, and spotted handkerchiefs. A few sedate-looking old-fashioned cits are probably engaged in conning over the Edinburgh papers of the day, and perhaps discussing *mordicus* the great question of Burgh Reform; but there is nothing either in the place or the company that at all harmonizes with one's notions of a great φροντιστήριον of Gusto. After waiting for a few minutes, however, the younger partner tips a sly wink across his counter, and beckons you to follow him through a narrow cut in its mahogany surface, into the unseen recesses of the establishment. A few steps downwards, and in the dark, land you in a sort of cel-

lar below the shop proper, and here by the dim and religious light which enters through one or two well-grated peeping-holes, your eyes soon discover enough of the furniture of the place, to satisfy you that you have at last reached the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of the Fine Arts. Plaster of Paris casts of the Head of the Farnese Hercules,—the Dancing Faun,—the Laocoon,—and the Hermaphrodite, occupy conspicuous stations on the counters; one large table is entirely covered with a book of Canova's designs, Turner's Liber Studiorum, and such sort of manuals; and in those corners where the little light there is streams brightest, are placed, upon huge piles of corduroy and kerseymere, various wooden boxes, black, brown, and blue, wherein are locked up from all eyes save those of the privileged and initiated frequenters of the scene, various pictures and sketches, chiefly by living artists, and presents to the proprietor. Mr Bridges, when I asked him on my first visit, what might be the contents of these mysterious receptacles, made answer in a true technico-Caledonian strain,—"Oo, Doctor Morris, they're just a wheen *bits* —and (added he, with a most knowing compression of his lips),—let me tell you what, Dr

Morris, there's some no that ill *bits* amang them neither.

The *bit* that attracted most of my admiration, was a small and exquisitely finished picture, by William Allan—the subject, *Two Tartar Robbers dividing their Spoil.* I shall not describe this piece, because I have since seen a masterly etching of it in an unfinished state, executed by a young Scotch engraver of the name of Steuart, which I have ordered to be sent me as soon as it is completed, so that you will have an opportunity of judging for yourself. The energy of the design, however, and the inimitable delicacy of the colouring, made me very curious to see some of the larger productions of the same artist; and I had no sooner hinted so much, than Bridges proposed to carry me at once to Mr Allan's *atelier*. The artist, he said, was extremely unwell, and confined to his room; but he could assure me of a kind reception. I needed very little pressing, so we proceeded immediately *quâ data via fuit.* We had no great distance to walk, for Mr Allan lives in the Parliament-Close, not a gun-shot from where we were.

After climbing several flights of a stair-case, we were ushered into the house of the painter; and Mr Bridges, being quite at home, conduct-

ed us straight into his painting-room—the most picturesque painting-room, I fancy, in Europe. Mr Allan returned about two years ago to Edinburgh, (the place of his birth,) from a residence of many years in various regions of the East, and his apartment is decorated in a most splendid manner with the trophies of his wanderings. The wainscoat is completely covered with rich clusters of military accoutrements, Turkish scimitars, Circassian bows and quivers, hauberks of twisted mail from Caucasus, daggers, dirks, javelins, and all manner of long unwieldy fowling-pieces—Georgian, Armenian, and Tartar. These are arranged, for the most part, in circles, having shields and targets of bone, brass, and leather for their centres. Helmets, of all kinds and sizes, are hung above these from the roof, and they are interspersed with most gorgeous draperies of shawls, turbans, and saddle-cloths. Nothing can be more beautiful than the effect of the whole; and indeed I suppose it is, so far as it goes, a complete fac-simile of the barbaric magnificence of the interior decorations of an eastern palace. The exterior of the artist himself harmonized a good deal with his furniture; for he was arrayed, by way of *robe-de-chambre*, in a dark Circassian vest, the breast

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of which was loaded with innumerable quilted lurking-places, originally, no doubt, intended for weapons of warfare, but now occupied with the harmless shafts of hair-pencils; while he held in his hand the smooth cherrywood stalk of a Turkish tobacco-pipe, apparently converted very happily into a pallet-guard. A swarthy complexion, and a profusion of black hair, tufted in a wild, though not ungraceful manner, together with a pair of large sparkling eyes, looking out from under strong shaggy brows, full of vivacious and ardent expressiveness—were scarcely less speaking witnesses of the life of roaming and romantic adventure, which, I was told, this fine artist had led. In spite of his bad health, which was indeed but too evident, his manners seemed to be full of a light and playful sportiveness, which is by no means common among the people of our nation, still less among the people of Scotland; and this again was, every now and then, exchanged for a depth of enthusiastic earnestness, still more evidently derived from a sojourn among men whose blood flows through their veins with a heat and a rapidity to which the North is a stranger.

The painter, being extremely busy, could not afford us much of his time upon this visit, but

shewed us, after a few minutes, into an adjoining apartment, the walls of which were covered with his works, and left us there to examine them by ourselves. For many years I have received no such feast as was now afforded me; it was a feast of pure delight—above all, it was a feast of perfect novelty, for the scenes in which Mr Allan has lived have rendered the subjects of his paintings totally different, for the most part, from those of any other artist, dead or alive; and the manner in which he treats his subjects is scarcely less original and peculiar. The most striking of his pieces are all representations of human beings, living and moving under the influence of manners whereof we know little, but which the little we do know of them has tended to render eminently interesting to our imaginations. His pencil transports us at once into the heart of the East—the

> Land of the myrtle, the rose, and the vine,
> Where the flowers ever blossom, the skies ever shine,
> And all save the spirit of Man is divine.

On one side we see beautiful creatures—radiant in a style of beauty with which poetry alone has ever attempted to make us familiar; on another, dark and savage men, their faces stamp-

ed with the full and fervid impress of passions which the manners and the faith of Christendom teach men, if not to subdue within them, at least to conceal in their exterior. The skies, too, are burning everywhere in the brightness of their hot, unclouded blue,—and the trees that lift their heads among them, wear wild fantastic forms, no less true to nature than they are strange to us. The buildings also have all a new character of barbarian pomp about them—cities of flat-roofed houses, mingled ever and anon with intervening gardens—fountains sparkling up with their freshening spray among every shade of foliage—mosques breaking the sky here and there with their huge white domes and gilded cupolas—turrets and minarets shooting from among the gorgeous mass of edifices—pale and slender forms, that

> ———" Far and near,
> Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere."

The whole room might be considered as forming of itself one picture—for, wherever I looked, I found that my eyes were penetrating into a scene, of which the novelty was so universal, as to give it at first sight something of the effect of uniformity.

The most celebrated of the pictures still in his possession, is the *Sale of Circassian Captives to a Turkish Bashaw.** I think it is probable you must have read some account of this picture in the newspapers more than a year ago; for it was one season in the London Exhibition, and attracted great admiration, as I hear, from all the critics who saw it there. You will find a pretty full description, however, in one of the Numbers of Blackwood's Magazine, which I have lately sent you—although I cannot say that I think this description quite so accurate as it might have been. The picture does not stand in need of the aid of fancy, in order to make it be admired; and I cannot help thinking there has been a good deal of mere fancy gratuitously mixed up with the statement there given, both of its composition and its expression. The essential interest of the piece, however—the groupe, namely, of the lover parted from his mistress, and the fine contrast afforded to this groupe, by the cold, determined, brutal indifference in the countenance and attitude of the Bashaw, are given quite as they ought to be; and the adjuncts,

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* This picture has since been purchased by the Earl of Wemyss and March.

which have been somewhat misrepresented, are of comparatively trivial importance. I can scarcely conceive of a finer subject for this kind of painting; nor can I easily suppose, that it could have been treated in a more masterly manner. The great number of the figures does not in the least mar the harmony of the general expression; nay, in order to make us enter fully into the nature of the barbarian scene represented, it was absolutely necessary to shew us, that it was a scene of common occurrence, and every day gazed on by a thousand hard eyes, without the slightest touch of compassion or sympathy. It was not necessary to represent the broken-heart-sufferers before us as bending under the weight of any calamity peculiar to themselves alone. They are bowed down, not with the touch of individual sorrow alone, but with the despair, the familiar despair of a devoted and abandoned race —a race, among whose brightest gleams of felicity, there must ever mingle the shadows of despondence—whose bridegrooms can never go forth "rejoicing in their strength"—whose brides can never be "brought out of their palaces," without some darkening clouds of melancholy remembrances, and still more melancholy fears,

to cast a gloom over the gay procession. Solitary sorrows are the privilege of freemen; it is the darker lot of slaves to suffer in crowds, and before crowds. Their misery has no sanctuary; they are not left alone even to die. They are cattle, not men; they must be counted by the head before being led forth to the slaughter.

The colouring of this picture is as charming as its conception is profound. The fault found with it by some of the critics—I mean the grayness and uniform sobriety of its hues—strikes me as being one of its greatest beauties. Without this, it was impossible that the artist could have given so fine an idea of the studious coolness and shadiness of an oriental palace—so different, so necessarily different, from anything that luxury can ever demand in our northern climates. It harmonizes, too, in the happiest manner with the melancholy character of the scene represented. It seems as if even the eastern sun had been willing to withdraw his beams from such a spectacle of misery. Where the light does stream through the narrow window at the back of the lordly Turk, nothing can be richer than the tones of the drapery—the curtains that shelter—above all, the embroidered

cushions and carpets that support the luxurious Merchant of Blood. The cold, blue dampness of the marble-floor, on which the victims of his brutality are kneeling, or staggering before him, contrasts, as it should do, with the golden pomp amidst which the oppressor is seated. It is so, that they who drink the waters of bitterness, and are covered with sackcloth and ashes, should be contrasted with him, who "is clothed in fine linen, and fareth sumptuously every day." There are, however, many other pictures of the artist against which the same charge might have been brought with greater justice.

There are several beautiful little pictures, the scene of which is laid in the same region; and I think they have an admirable effect as viewed in juxta-position with this splendid masterpiece. They afford little glimpses, as it were, into the week-day employments and amusements of the beings, who are represented in the larger picture as undergoing the last severity of their hard destiny. They prepare the eye to shudder at the terrors of the captivity, by making it familiar with the scenes of mirth, and gaiety, and innocence, which these terrors are fated so often to disturb. Such, above all, was the effect of a

sweet little picture, which represents a Circassian Family seated at the door of their own cottage, beneath the shadow of their sycamore, while the golden sun is going down calmly behind them, amidst the rich, quiet azure of their own paternal mountains. The old father and mother, with their children sporting about their knees, while the travelling musician is dancing before them in his wild grotesque attitudes, to the sound of his rebeck—and the daughter just blushing into womanhood, that peeps, with that face of innocent delight, over the shoulder of her mother—how little do they think for the moment of anything beyond the simple mirth of their sequestered home! And yet such are the solitudes to which the foot of the spoiler may so easily find a path. Surely there is a fine feeling of poetry in the mind of this painter. He knows well that there are two sides to the great picture of Human Life; and he has imagination to feel how they reflect, mutually, interest, and passion, and tenderness, upon each other.

Another picture, delightfully characteristic of his genius, is that of *a Jewish Family in Poland making merry before a Wedding*. The

piece is small, and the colouring, as usual with this artist, the reverse of glaring; but the whole is suffused over with the quiet richness of twilight, and the *effect* is at once so powerful and so true, that we cannot sufficiently admire it, when we consider how studiously all the common quackery of the art has been avoided in its production. The left of the canvass is covered with a cluster of happy faces, grouped above, below, and around their rustic musician, and gazing on the evolutions of a dance, wild, yet graceful and stately in its wildness, like the melody which accompanies it. The bride has scarcely passed the years of infancy; for among the Jews of Poland, and we believe we might add, among the Jews of England too, the old oriental fashion of very early marriages is still religiously adhered to. Her hair is braided with jewels—another beautiful orientalism; and she surveys the scene from her post of eminence with a truly eastern mixture of childish delight, womanly vanity, and virgin bashfulness. Apart from the young people, near a window, the light of which comes mellowed through tangled tresses of ivy and rose-leaves, is seen a grave small group of the Elders of Israel. These patriarchal figures pay no respect either to the music or the dance;

but they seem to make some atonement for this neglect by their close and assiduous attentions to a certain tall picturesque flask,

> "Which leaves a glow like amethyst
> Upon the lips that it hath kiss'd."

The whole picture makes us feel delightfully present in a scene very far removed from our manners, but true in everything to nature, and, in spite of its geography, true in everything to that well-remembered East, which draws to itself the first morning-look and the last evening-look—which receives every hymn and prayer, and oath and vow—which is still the resting-place of the memory, the hope, and the faith of the expatriated Hebrew.

The vile habits common among such of this exiled race as are to be met with in our country, have had the effect of rendering the associations connected by us with the name of *Jew*, very remote from pleasing—to say nothing of poetical; nor have the attempts of a few poets and novelists to counteract these deep-rooted associations been at all successful in the main. In truth, they have not merited to be so, excepting in regard to their intention alone. It is useless to waste wit in attempting to gild over the mean-

[library stamp]

ness of a despicable old Hunks, who starves himself and his cat, and spends his whole time in counting rouleaus. A sentimental old clothes-man or pawnbroker is a being whom we can by no means admit into our world of imaginative existence. He is as completely and manifestly an *ens meræ rationis*, as any of the new species to which the human naturalist is introduced in the dangerous and delusive *horti sicci* of the circulating library.

But the Polish Jews are a very different kind of people from our ones. They form a population of several hundred thousands, and occupy whole towns, villages, and tracts of territory by themselves. Here they live in a state of great simplicity and honesty, cultivating the soil, and discharging all the healthful duties of ordinary citizenship. Above all, they are distinguished from their brethren in Germany and elsewhere, by a rigid observance of the laws of their religion. In short, they are believers in the Old Testament, and still expect, with sincere devotion, the coming of their Messiah. The respect which a Polish Jew meets with all over the continent, so strongly contrasted with the utter contempt heaped upon all the other children of his race, is primarily, of course, the fruit of that

long experience which has established the credit and honour of his dealings; but it is certainly very much assisted and strengthened by that natural feeling of respect with which all men regard those who are sincere in what they seem. The character of these Polish Jews, with their quiet and laborious lives, with their firm attachment to the principles of honesty, with their benevolence and their hospitality, and, above all, with their fervid and melancholy love for their old Faith—a love which has outlived so many centuries of exile, disappointment, and wretchedness—this character, whatever may be thought of it in other respects, cannot surely be denied to be a highly poetical one. Mr Allan, who has enjoyed so many opportunities of contemplating the working of human thoughts and passions under so many different shapes, has seen this character, and the manners in which it is bodied forth, with the eye of a poet and a painter; and I would hope the *Merry-Making* may not be the only glimpse of both with which he may favour us.

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But there would be no end of it, were I to think of acting Cicerone through the whole of his gallery, in a letter such as this: and besides, these are not pictures whose merits can be even tolerably interpreted through the medium of words. They are everywhere radiant with an expression of pathos, that is entirely peculiar to the art of which they are specimens. They cannot be comprehended unless they be seen; and it is worth while going a long journey, were it only to see them. It is not on a first view that the faults of pictures possessing so much merit, can be at all felt by persons capable of enjoying their beauties. But I shall enter upon these in my next; I shall also say something of the pictures which Mr Allan has painted more lately, and the scenes of which are laid nearer to ourselves. Wide as is the field of the East, and delicious as is the use he has made of that untrodden field—I am glad to find that he does not mean to confine himself to it. The pictures he has painted of oriental subjects, are rich in the expression of feelings, gathered during his wanderings among the regions to which they belong. But there are other feelings, and more powerful ones, too, which ought to fix, and I think it pro-

bable they will do so, the matured and once more domesticated mind of such a painter as Mr Allan.

P. M.

LETTER XLVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The largest and most finished picture, which Mr Allan has painted upon any subject not oriental, (or at least not partaking of an oriental character,) is that of *the Press-Gang*. The second time that I went to his house, he was in the act of superintending the packing up of this fine piece, for being sent into the country;* so that I was lucky in having a view of it at all—for I certainly was not allowed time to contemplate it in so leisurely a manner as I could have wished. It is of about the same dimensions as the Circassian Slaves, and the canvass, as in it, is

* The picture belongs to Mr Horrocks of Tillihewan Castle, Dumbartonshire.

filled with a very large number of figures; but I am not prepared to say, that I think the same happy effect is produced by this circumstance as in the other.

I question, however, whether any scene of actual British Life could have been selected more happily calculated for such a pencil as Mr Allan's. The moment one sees the picture, one cannot help being struck with wonder, that such a subject should have been left so long unhandled; but where, after all, was ever the British artist that could have occupied it in such a manner, as to throw any difficulties in Mr Allan's way, or even to take away the least of the originality, which he has displayed in its management? The canvass represents the house of a fisherman by the sea-side—neat and cleanly, as the houses of respectable fishermen are always found—but more picturesque in its interior than the house of any other poor man can well be, from the mixture of suspended nets and fishing-tackle everywhere diversifying the more usual kinds of peasant-*plenishing*. It is supposed, that the son of the fisherman has just returned from a long voyage in a merchant-ship—his parents are preparing to welcome the wanderer with

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their fatted calf—and his mistress, having heard the news of his arrival, has hurried, half-clothed as she was, in the eagerness of her unsuspecting love, to be folded in his arms. Scarcely are the first warm, tearful greetings over, ere a caitiff neighbour gives notice to the Press-Gang—and the picture represents the moment when they have rushed into the house, and pinioned their prey. The agony of the Sailor-Boy is speechless, and he stands with his hand upon his face, as if stunned and insensible to the nature of his misery. His other hand, however, has not quitted the hand of his sweet-heart, who has swooned away, and is only prevented from lying like a corpse upon the floor, by this his unconscious support. His father looks on in despair; but he has presence of mind enough to know, that resistance would be unavailing. The mother has seized the lieutenant by the hand, and is thrusting upon him all their little household store of guarded guineas, as if she had hoped to purchase her boy's safety by her bribe. In a chair by the fire, meanwhile, which even joy could not have enabled him to leave, the aged and infirm grandfather sits immoveable, and sick at heart—his eyes turned faintly upwards, his feeble hands clasped together, and the big drops

coursing each other down the pale and furrowed cheeks of his half-bewildered second childishness. The wife of the old man—for she, too, is alive to partake in all this wretchedness—is not so infirm as her partner, but she has moved from her chair only to give aid to him. Dear as are her children to her, her husband is dearer—he is everything to her, and she thinks of nothing but him. She has a cup of water in her hand, of which she beseeches him to drink, and gazes on his emaciated features with an eye, that tells of the still potency of long years of wedded love—a love that has survived all the ardours of youthful blood, and acquired only a holier power from the lapse of all their life of hardships. Perhaps this is the most noble conception in the whole picture—it does not disturb the impression of the parting of the youthful lovers ; but reflects back a nobler sanctity upon all their sufferings, by bringing before us a fresh poetic vision of the eternal might of those ties, which that broken hearted agony is bruising—

> " Ties that around the heart are spun,
> And will not, cannot be undone."

Even over the groupe of stubborn mariners around the captive boy, the poetical soul of the

painter has not disdained to lavish something of its redeeming softness; their hard and savage features are fixed, indeed, and resolute: but there is no cruelty, no wantonness, no derision, in their steadfast look. Like the officer who commands them, they do what they conceive to be their duty—and such it is—but they do no more. It was a delightful delicacy of conception, which made the painter dare to part with so much of the vulgar powers of contrast, and to make the rainbow of his tenderness display its gentle radiance, even here in the thickest blackness of his human storm.

The fainting girl is represented in a very difficult attitude (I mean difficult for the painter), her collapsed limbs, as I have said, being prevented from falling prostrate on the floor only by the hand of her lover, which, even in the speechless agony of despair, refuses instinctively to let her hand go. Her head, however, almost touches the floor, and her long dishevelled tresses of raven black, sweep it already with their disconsolate richness. Her virgin bosom, but a moment before bursting with the sudden swell of misery, is now calm and pale—all its throbbings over for a time, even as if the finger of death had been there to appease them. Her

beautiful lips are tinged with an envious livid stain, and her sunken eye-lids are black with the rush of recoiling blood, amidst the melancholy marble of her cheeks and forehead. One cannot look upon her without remembering the story of Crazy Jane, and thinking that here, too, is a creature whose widowed heart can never hope for peace—one to whom some poet of love might hereafter breathe such words as those already breathed by one of the truest of poets :—

" But oh! when midnight wind careers,
And the gust pelting on the out-house shed,
Makes the cock shrilly in the rain-storm crow,
To hear thee sing some ballad full of woe,
Ballad of ship-wrecked sailor floating dead,
Whom his own true-love buried in the sands!
Thee, gentle Woman—for thy voice re-measures
Whatever tones and melancholy pleasures
The things of Nature utter—birds or trees,
Or moan of ocean gale in weedy caves,
Or where the stiff grass 'mid the heath-plant waves,
Murmur and music thin of sudden breeze."

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As I am not one of those who walk round a whole gallery of pictures in a single morning, and think themselves entitled to say they have seen them—and even to make criticisms upon their merits and demerits,—I by no means thought of perplexing my feeling of the power of *the Press-Gang*, by looking at any other of Mr Allan's pictures on the same day; I have often gone back since, however, and am now quite familiar with all the pictures still in his own possession. Those painted on domestic British subjects, are all filled with the same deep and tender tastefulness, which the Press-Gang so eminently discovers; but none of them are so happily conceived in point of arrangement, nor, perhaps, is the colouring of the artist seen to the same advantage in any one of them. Indeed, in comparing the Press-Gang itself with the Circassian Slaves, the Jewish Family, and some of the earliest pieces, I could not help entertaining a suspicion, that in this great department the artist has rather retrograded than advanced since his return to Britain. It may be that his eyes had been so long accustomed to light, shade, and colour, as exhibited in oriental regions, that his mode of painting had become embued and penetrated with the idea of repre-

senting these effects alone—and that so the artist may not yet have entirely regained the eyes, without which, it is certain, he cannot possess the hand, of a British painter. It is very obvious, that this is a failing which, considering what masterpieces of colouring some of his older pictures are, cannot possibly continue long to lessen the power and beauty of his performances. I speak of the general colouring of his pieces—I have no doubt they may have lesser and more particular faults offensive to more scientific eyes, and perhaps not quite so likely to be got rid of. Almost all the artists, with whom I have conversed on the subject of his pictures, seem to say, that they consider him somewhat defective in his representation of the colour of the naked flesh. And I do think (although I should scarcely have made the discovery for myself), that he does make it rather dead and opaque, and gives it too little relief. But, perhaps, the small size of his pictures, and the multiplicity of figures which they contain, are circumstances unfavourable to this species of excellence. If his objects were less numerous, and presented larger surfaces, he would find it more easy to make them vivid, transparent, and beautiful, and to give them a stronger relief by finer gradations

of shadow. A small canvass, occupied with so many figures, never has a broad and imposing effect at first sight. The first feeling it excites is curiosity about what they are engaged with, and we immediately go forward to pry into the subject, and spell out the story. A piece, with larger and fewer figures, if the subject be well chosen, is understood at once; and nothing tells more strongly on the imagination, or strikes us with a more pleasing astonishment, than a bold effect of light and shadow, seen at a convenient distance.

The execution of a picture, however, is a thing of which I cannot venture to speak, without a great feeling of diffidence. The choice of subjects is a matter more within the reach of one that has never gone through any regular apprenticeship of Gusto; and much as I have been delighted with Mr Allan's pictures, and much as I have been delighted with their subjects, too—I by no means think, that his subjects are in general of a kind much calculated to draw out the highest parts of his genius, or to affect mankind with the same high and enduring measure of admiration and delight, which his genius, otherwise directed, might, I nothing question, enable

him to command. In this respect, indeed, he only errs (if error there be,) along with almost all the great artists, his contemporaries—nay, it is perhaps but too true, that he and they have alike been compelled to err by the frivolous spirit of the age in which they have been born. I fear, I greatly fear, that, in spite of all the genius which we see every day breaking out in different departments of this delightful art, the day of its loftiest and most lasting triumphs has gone by. However, to despair of the human mind in any one of its branches of exertion, is a thing very repugnant to my usual feelings.

P. M.

P. S. Before quitting Mr Allan's *attelier*, I must tell you that I have seen an exquisite sketch of the Murder of Archbishop Sharpe, which he has just executed. The picture will, I doubt not, be his domestic masterpiece. The idea of painting a picture on this subject may probably have been suggested to him by a piece of business in which he is just about to engage, viz. making designs for the illustration of Waverley, and the other novels of the same author. What a field is here! I have seen none of his designs; but he will doubtless make them in a

manner worthy of himself; and if he does so, his name will descend for ever in glorious companionship with that of the most original author of our days, and the most powerful author that Scotland ever has produced. Q. F. F. Q. S., quoth

P. M.

LETTER XLIX.

TO THE SAME.

I know of no painter, who shows more just reflection and good judgment in his way of conceiving a subject, and arranging the parts of it, than Allan. His circumstances are always most happily chosen, and the characters introduced are so skilfully delineated, as to prove that the painter has been an excellent observer of life. His pictures are full of thought, and show a most active and intelligent mind. They display most graphically the fruits of observation; and the whole of the world which they represent, is suffused over with a very rare and precious breathing of tenderness and delicacy of feeling. In short, were his subjects taken from the highest field of his art, and had they any fundamental ideas of permanent and lofty interest at the bot-

tom of them, I do not see why Mr Allan should not be truly a Great Painter. But his genius has as yet been cramped and confined by a rather over-stretched compliance with the taste of the times.

The highest purpose to which painting has ever been applied, is that of expressing ideas connected with Religion; and the decay of the interest attached by mankind to ideas of that class, is evinced by nothing in a more striking manner, than by the nature of the subjects now (in preference to them) commonly chosen for painting, and most relished by the existing generation. It would seem, indeed, as if the decay of interest in great things and great ideas had not shown itself in regard to religion alone. Even subjects taken from national history seem to be scarcely so familiar to the imaginations and associations of ordinary spectators, as to be much relished or deeply felt in any modern exhibition-room. It is probable, that subjects like those chosen by Wilkie (and of late by Allan also,) come most home now-a-days to the feelings of the multitude. They pre-suppose no knowledge of the past—no cherished ideas habitually dwelt on by the imagination—no deep feeling of religion—no deep feeling of patriotism—but merely

a capacity for the most common sympathies and sensibilities of human nature. The picture makes no demand on the previous habits or ideas of the spectator—it tells its own story, and it tells it entirely—but exactly in proportion as it wants retrospective interest, I am inclined to think it wants endurance of interest. I think Wilkie's species of painting may be said to bear the same relation to the highest species which sentimental comedies and farces bear to regular tragedies. But in all this, as I have already hinted, it is probable the public is most to blame—not the painter. Indeed, the very greatest artists, were they to go on making creations either in painting, poetry, or any other art, without being guided by the responses of public enthusiasm, would run a sad risk of losing their way. The genius of a gifted individual—his power of inventing and conceiving—is an instrument which he himself may not always have the judgment to employ to the best advantage, and which is more safely directed to its mark by the aggregated feelings, I will not say, of *the* multitude, but at least of numbers. Even the scattered suffrages of amateurs, who, by artificial culture, have acquired habits of feeling different from those of the people about them, must always be

a very trifling stimulus, when compared with the trumpet-notes of a whole nation, hailing an artist for having well expressed ideas alike interesting to them all. There is no popular sympathy in these days with those divinest feelings of the human soul, which formed the essence of interest in the works of the sculptors of Greece —still more in those of the painters of modern Italy—and the expression of which was rewarded in both cases by the enthusiasm, boundless and grateful, of those by whom these artists were habitually surrounded.

I confess, there are very few things of which I am so desirous, as of seeing a true school of painting in its highest form established among the people of Britain. But this can never be, till the painters get rid of that passion for *inventing* subjects, which at present seems to predominate among them all. The object of a great painter should be, not to invent subjects, but to give a graphical form to ideas universally known, and contemplated with deep feeling. An Entombing of Christ—a Madonna and Child—a Flight into Egypt, are worth all the *larmoyant* scenes which can ever be conceived out of the circumstances of modern life—circumstances, which, although they may be treated with the

utmost genius, can never cease to be in the main prosaic. Even the early history of any modern nation, however replete it may be with remarkable events, can present no objects of which the imagination, set a-musing by the contemplation of its likeness, does not speedily find the limits, and the barrenness—from which, in a word, it does not turn away as unpoetical, after the first movements of excited curiosity and week-day sympathies have ceased. How different from all this narrowness, is the endless and immeasurable depth of a Religious Allegory, wherein the whole mystery of man and his destiny is called up to breathe its solemn and unfading charm upon the creation of the artist, and the mind of the spectator!

When one talks to a painter of the present day about the propriety of taking to subjects of religious import—above all, to those of the simplest construction, and the most purely allegorical nature,—there is nothing more common than to be told, that such subjects have been exhausted. If you are told, by way of confirmation of this, that the Scriptural pieces produced in this country are almost all very bad, you are, indeed, told nothing but the truth; because they are made up of insipid centos and compilations from

former painters, or absurd misapplications of the plastic antique. Having no real life or expression in them, they are universally regarded with indifference; and probably the grossest violations of costume, and the most vulgar forms, are better than this. Rembrandt, in painting Scriptural subjects, took such forms and dresses as his own country supplied, and his compositions were esteemed, because, whatever might be their want of dignity, they were at least pregnant with traits of which his countrymen understood the meaning. The fundamental ideas conveyed had a religious interest, and the vehicles made use of to express them, were in a certain sense good, because they were national, and not mere garbled recollections of ancient pictures and statues, made up into new forms and groupes, utterly destitute of coherence and truth. Paul Veronese made use of Venetian figures and dresses in treating the most sacred subjects, and although these violations of costume may appear ridiculous at first sight, yet, if we reflect a little, we shall perhaps find that it was the most judicious course he could have pursued. To make use of such nature as is before us, is always to secure consistency and truth of expression. There is besides a noble sincerity and simplicity in each nation

making use of such physiognomies and scenery as it is best acquainted with, to serve as the means of expressing ideas eternally to be loved and adored, in whatever way they may be represented. If I were a painter, and were engaged in painting Scripture pieces, I would boldly make use of such physiognomies and scenery as my country affords, and would think the surest way of exciting an interest in such performances would be, through the medium of common associations and well-known appearances, applied to subjects radically great and dignified in themselves.

But all this poverty of modern artists, has no weight as an argument against the use of religious subjects. Any one who has gone through even a few of the great collections at home, must be satisfied that Christian subjects have been by no means exhausted by the Ancient Masters. Even in any one of the subjects, of which these were most fond, there is no appearance, as if any one definite conception had ever come to be regarded as the truest or best way of treating it—far less as precluding the attempts of succeeding artists. It is the more lamentable, when one looks back upon this endless fertility of the old, to think of the narrow-minded preju-

dice which has barred the new painters from the same inexhaustible ranges of ideas and subjects. Before the imitation can ever be imagined to have reached its limit, we must suppose that we have ascertained the limit of that which it proposes to imitate. Now where is the man, however ardent an admirer of the genius of the great dead masters he may be—however deeply and passionately he may worship the divine spirit which animated their works, and immortalizes their memories—where is the man who can persuade himself for a moment, that, in expressing the gestures and features of divine beings, or beings partaking of sanctity above the conception of ordinary men, any one of those masters has gone as far as it is possible to go? The best of their productions only take us so far—there is always a deeper path, which the imagination must travel in its own light alone—and where is the certainty that this path may not be abridged—that some yet nearer approach may not be made to that, which, even by the greatest of men, seems to have been seen afar off at an immeasurable distance? At all events, the result would be so grand, that the attempt is well worthy of being made by every artist who feels in himself the stirrings and the consciousness of genius.

How natural and how fine a thing for a painter to desire to follow in the same path wherein Raphael, and Lionardo, and Perugino, have preceded him—to transplant himself anew into their ideas and their thoughts—to walk yet farther under the guidance of the same unwearied spirit which conducted them—and so to restore the broken links of connection between the art of past ages and the art of the present! And then how rich—how comprehensive is their sphere in all beauty which painting can need, in all expression after which the heart of man pants in its moments of reflective earnestness! What a lamentable contrast is that which the present condition of the art affords—how insecurely and unsatisfied the artist seems to be wandering about from one set of unfortunate subjects to another set yet more unfortunate!

The old masters did not merely imagine themselves to possess a sufficient field for all the rich inventiveness of their genius, within the story and allegory of the Bible—they seem to have been satisfied not unfrequently with a very small portion of the space which this mighty field afforded—nay, to have been contented, month after month, year after year, and life-time after life-time, with some one little fragment of

the whole—sometimes such as we should scarcely suppose it possible for them to have esteemed the best or richest in their power. Instead of seeking about for new subjects, they seem often to have formed such a love for some one subject as never, or, at least, seldom to leave it—unwearied in their admiration—in the intense fervour of their passionate love. It is thus that the divine Raphael seems to have delighted in manifold representations of the Madonna—each of them possessing an individual character—and yet each an aspiration of the same glorious spirit, after the same intangible evanescent divinity of conception. The far less lofty subject of the Herodias appears, in like manner, to have become a perfect common-place in all the school of Lionardo; while, in the Crucifixion, the soul of the great Durer seems to have found a more fitting theme on which to expend the ever unsatisfied, but never despairing depth of its melancholy musing sublimity. If it be true, that these men have exhausted anything, assuredly this is a discovery which neither themselves, nor any of their immediate disciples and most intelligent admirers, ever dreamed of.

Although, however, *Religion* and the aspira-

tion after the *Godlike*, was always the great centre spring of the ideas and endeavours of the old Italian Masters, there was another wide field upon which they moved with a grace and a freedom, no less superior to anything that is ever exhibited by modern artists—a field which has been less deserted by modern artists, and which they never do pretend to speak of as having been exhausted by those who preceded them—the Mythology of the Greeks. So far as I have been able to form any ideas concerning the Spirit of Greek Antiquity, I am of opinion that that Spirit—the internal being and essence of ancient Life and ancient Faith, was comprehended in a far more happy and more profound way by the old Italian painters—more, indeed, in all probability, from deep instinctive feeling of what is right and true, than from any great knowledge or learning—than ever seems to be attained to by any modern painters either of Italy, or Germany, or England—least of all by those of the most would-be-classical school in the world—the French. It might be reckoned unfair to draw any comparisons, or expect that any should be drawn between the gigantic genius of Michael Angelo, and the mind of any painter of our day, or, indeed,

of any of the ages that have elapsed between Michael Angelo's time and our own. The School of Athens of Raphael, in like manner, would be rejected as beyond the fair limit of comparison. But it is not necessary to seek for the confirmation of what I have said, in the works of such men as Buonarotti and Raphael alone. The Roman power, fulness, and magnificence of Julio Romano, and the fine voluptuousness in the Antiope of Coreggio, are things clearly derived from deeper sources than any which our modern painters ever dream of exploring. And yet all these painters considered the Christian Allegory as the only true subject on which to expend the full resources of their genius.—This Greek Mythology, in which they found things so much deeper than any that modern painters can find there—was only regarded by them as a bye-field of relaxation—a mere πάρεργον of their art. They viewed the subject of antiquity far more profoundly than their successors do, but they always kept it in complete subjection to their own more serious and loftier faith. They sought in it only for allegories, conceptions, and images of a less overwhelming dignity than the Bible could afford, and they treated these pretty much as the

oldest romantic poets did the fables of antiquity. The God Amur of the Provençals, is, perhaps, not much more different from the Eros of the Greeks, than the Mercury of Mantegna is from the true Athenian Hermes. Perhaps one of the finest exemplifications of the success with which modern art may make use of ancient mythology, is in the famous picture of the Contest of Virtue and Pleasure, by Perugino. It was in the Louvre a few years ago: I know not where it is now. The extremities of the fore-ground are occupied by two glorious trees, the one of bright and blooming foliage, on which some Cupids are seen tangled amidst the blossoms and fruit—the other is a dark and melancholy cypress, on one of whose barest branches an owl is perched, with its wings folded. Female figures with lances, the points of which terminate in flames, contend on the side of Love, others against him. Nothing can be finer than the diversity of attitudes among the combatants,—the very soul of antique luxury, and the very soul of antique severity, seem to have been caught by the pencil of the artist. The detail of the picture I have in a great measure forgotten, but the general effect I never shall—above all, the grand blue

THE TANJORE ...

mountains in the distance, seen on the one side, over woods and wilds full of satyrs and nymphs, and, in the other, a magnificent landscape of temples and towers, rising calmly out of solemn and orderly groves, such as we might imagine to have given shelter to the Platos and the Ciceros. A modern painter would probably have confined himself, in handling such a subject, to some merely plastic groupe, in which form would have been almost every thing—expression little—and accompaniment nothing.

Above all Scottish artists with whose works I am acquainted, I should like to see Mr Allan deserting the narrow field of modern art, and merely vulgar interest—and attempting once more to paint Scripture subjects as they deserve to be painted. The gentle and delicate character of his genius, seems not unworthy of being applied to the divinely benevolent allegories of our faith—or, if these be too much for him, to the simple, beautiful, unfailing situations of actual life, which the Bible history presents in such overflowing abundance. Should he be afraid of venturing so far from the ordinary themes in which spectators are now accustomed to find interest—the history of his country affords a fine field, which may be looked upon as intermediate

between that on which he has as yet trodden, and that on which I would fain have him feel the ambition to tread. In taking hold of religious subjects in Scotland, he would undoubtedly have to contend (over and above the prejudices of which I have already spoken,) with another set of prejudices scarcely less difficult to be overcome—those, I mean, of a nation among whom Religion is commonly regarded in a way by far too speculative, and too little imbued with pure and beautiful feeling. It was worthy only of the savage soul of Knox, to banish all the most delightful of the arts from the house of God—to degrade for ever those arts from their proper purpose and destination, among the people whose Faith and Worship he reformed, only because his own rude (though masculine) mind wanted grace to comprehend what their true purposes, and destinations, and capacities are. This was indeed the triumph of a bigot, who had neither an eye nor a heart for Beauty. The light of the man's virtues should not be forgotten; but why should an enlightened nation continue to punish themselves by walking in the cold shadow of his prejudices?

But the old history of Scotland abounds in scenes of the most romantic and poetic interest;

and the self-love of the nation, debarred from any exclusive pride in atchievements of later days, atones for this to itself by a more accurate knowledge of the national past, and a more fervent interest in the men and actions the national history discloses, than are commonly to be found among nations whose independent existence has continued unbroken down to the present day. Here then is a rich field, to which Mr Allan may turn not only without prejudices to encounter, but with the whole prejudices of his nation eminently interested in his endeavours, and, if he succeed, (as why should he not?) eminently and enthusiastically delighted in his success. I hope the Murder of Archbishop Sharpe is designed as the first of a great and magnificent series of Scottish Paintings; but I think it would have been better to choose, as the subject of the first of such a series, some scene which the whole of the Scottish nation might have been more likely to contemplate with the same species of emotions.

P. M.

LETTER L.

TO THE SAME.

The length to which I have extended my remarks on Mr Allan's pictures, may perhaps appear a little extravagant; but I think, upon the whole, that these pictures, and this artist, form one of the most interesting subjects which can at the present time attract the attention of a traveller in Scotland, and therefore I do not repent of the *lengthiness* of my observations. I wish I had been able to treat the subject more as it deserves to be treated in some other respects.

The truth is that till Wilkie and Allan arose, it can scarcely be said Scotland had ever given any promise of expressing her national thoughts and feelings, by means of the pencil, with any degree of power and felicity at all approaching to that in which she has already often made use

of the vehicle of words—or even to that which she had displayed in her early music. Before this time, the poverty of Scotland, and the extreme difficulty of pictorial education, as contrasted with the extreme facility of almost every other kind of education, had been sufficient to prevent the field of art from ever attracting the sympathies and ambition of the young men of genius in this country; and the only exceptions to this rule are such as cannot fail to illustrate, in a very striking way, the general influence of its authority. Neither can I be persuaded to think, that the only exceptions which did exist were at all very splendid ones. The only two Scottish painters of former times, of whom any of the Scotch connoisseurs, with whom I have conversed, seem to speak with much exultation, are Gavin Hamilton and Runciman. The latter, although he was far inferior in the practice of art—although he knew nothing of colouring, and very little of drawing—yet, in my opinion, possessed much more of the true soul of a painter than the former. There is about his often miserably drawn figures, and as often miserably arranged groupes, a certain rude character of grandeur, a certain indescribable majesty and

originality of conception, which shows at once, that had he been better educated, he might have been a princely painter. The other possessed in perfection all the manual part of his art—he made no mistakes—he was sure so far as he went—he had the complete mastery of his tools. The subjects which he chose, too, were admirable, and in his treatment of many of them altogether, he has displayed a union of talents, which few even of the very first artists the world has produced could ever equal. But Gavin Hamilton was not a great painter. Nature never meant him to be one. He wanted soul to conceive, and therefore his hands, so ready and so skilful to execute, were of little avail. I have seen many of his works in Italy—as yet none of them here; for the artist always lived in Italy, and very few of his paintings have ever, I believe, reached the country of his birth. At a late period of his life, indeed, he came to Scotland, where he was possessed of a considerable paternal estate, had a painting-room fitted up in his house, and resolved to spend the remainder of his days among his countrymen. But great as he really was in many respects, and great above all comparison as he must have appeared, or, at

least, was entitled to appear in Scotland *then*, he found little sympathy and little enthusiasm to sustain and reward his labours; and, after painting a few large pictures for the Duke of Hamilton (with whose family he was nearly connected), Gavin returned once more to Rome—never to leave it again. There indeed he enjoyed a high and brilliant reputation. He was a kind of Mengs among the cognoscenti, and his name, like that of Mengs, was rendered celebrated throughout the Continent by the praises of French travellers and Italian ciceroni. But Mengs has since been reduced to his due dimensions; and Gavin Hamilton could have no reason to complain that he has suffered the same fate, although indeed it is very true, the dimensions to which he has been reduced are yet smaller than those of Mengs. Such is the invariable destiny of all but the true demi-gods. For his own living hour, each may possess all the expansion of popular renown; but, when they come to take their place among the great assembly of the illustrious dead,

> "Behold a wonder! they but now who seemed
> In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,
> Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
> Throng numberless." ——

Even the raptures of Voltaire can no longer persuade men that either Mengs or Hamilton were worthy representatives of the great painters of the centuries preceding.

It would seem, however, as if the first day-spring of art in Scotland had been enough to illuminate many regions besides those to which I have already alluded. For the first time is Scotland now possessed of admirable landscape painters, as well as of historical painters; and in the department of portrait, the progress she has made has been no less remarkable. With regard to landscape painting, it is very true, that she has not yet equalled the present glories of the sister kingdom—but then the world has only one TURNER, and Scotland comes far nearer to the country which has had the honour of producing that great genius, than any other country in Europe. She has reared many artists in this department, whose works are well known in England, and she has fixed the residence and affections of a countryman of our own, whose works, were they known as they deserve to be, would, I am persuaded, confer more pure delight on all that are capable of understanding and feeling their beauties, than it has almost ever

fallen to the lot of any one artist to bestow upon his contemporaries.

I owe my first acquaintance with this painter to my friend Wastle, who is extremely fond of his company, no less than of his pictures; but have since met him very often in the fashionable societies of the place. It is a singular enough coincidence, too, that Mr Williams (for he is your namesake) has owed scarcely less of his celebrity to his residence in foreign countries, and his choice of foreign subjects, than Mr Allan has done. It is true, that he has long been known as an admirable landscape painter, and, I think, you must have seen some of his works in Wales, as well as in London; but it was not till last year, when Mr Williams returned to Edinburgh, after travelling for some years in Italy and Greece, that his genius seems to have displayed itself in its utmost power. Familiar as he had all his life been with the beauty and the grandeur of mountains, lakes, and rivers, and skilful as he had shown himself in transfusing their shapes and their eloquence to his canvass—there seem to have slumbered in his breast the embers of a nobler fire, which never burst into a flame until he had gazed upon the majestic face of Nature in lands, where her

majesty borrows a holier and a sublimer influence from the memory of men and actions, in comparison with which the greatest of modern men, and the most brilliant of modern actions, must be contented to appear as dim and pigmy. Even Italy, for there was the scene of his first wanderings, seems to have wanted the power to call forth this hidden spark into its full radiance. It was reserved for the desolate beauty of Greece, to breathe into this fine spirit such a sense of the melancholy splendour of Nature, in climes where she was once no less gay than splendid—such a deep and touching sympathy, with the decays of earthly greatness, and the vanity of earthly ambition—such a mournful tenderness of feeling and of pencil, as have been sufficient to render him at once one of the most original, one of the most impressive, and one of the most delightful of painters.

Surely I am a lover of nature; but I confess, that pictured representations of external nature, when linked with no subject of human action or passion, have in general been able to produce comparatively but little effect upon my mind. The paintings of Claude, indeed, always affected me in the most powerful manner; but then, I

think, the idea that the scene was in Italy, and the ruined shapes of Roman aqueducts, towers, and temples, gleaming beneath his sunny lustre, or more gentle moonlight, always entered very largely into the deep gratification I received from contemplating them. The same kind of instruments of excitement have been far more liberally employed by Williams, than by any of the great painters with whose works I am acquainted—and besides, the scenes of Greece, and the desolation of Greece, are things to my mind of yet nobler power than any of which even Claude had command. It is there,—I may be wrong in confessing it,—it is there, among the scattered pillars of Thebes or Corinth—or in full view of all the more glorious remains of more glorious Athens—or looking from the ivied and mouldering arches of Delphi, quite up through the mountain mists to the craggy summits of Parnassus, and the far off windings of the Castalian brook—it is there, that the footsteps of men appear to have stamped a grander sanctity even on the most magnificent forms of nature. It is there that Williams seems first to have felt, and it is in his transcripts of these glorious scenes, that I myself have been sensible of feel-

ing, the whole fulness and awfulness of the works of the Creator—

> —All this magnificent effect of power,
> The earth we tread, the sky which we behold
> By day, and all the pomp which night reveals.

As yet Mr Williams has not had time to finish many pictures from the sketches he made in Greece; but, for the most part, these sketches are in themselves most charming pictures; for, in spite of the fierce suns which all preceding travellers dreaded and shunned as much as possible, and which no preceding painter ever braved, it was his custom to colour his sketches upon the spot where they were made. The effects which he has thus produced are so very new, that but for the certainty one has in regard to the mode of their production, it is not to be denied, they would appear somewhat extravagant. I have wandered over all the scenes of deserted grandeur in Southern France and Italy—but these Greek ruins make their appearance in a style of majestic splendour, for which my eyes were totally unprepared. The action of the atmosphere upon the marble seems to have been quite different here from any thing I have ever witnessed elsewhere; and this, taken together with the daz-

zling brightness reflected from innumerable fields of waving mustard, has thrown such a breadth of yellow radiance around the crumbling monuments of wisdom and valour, that the eye starts back at first, as if from the glare of the sun in half-complete eclipse. By degrees, however, the intense truth of the representation forces its way into one's heart, and you gaze with your hand over your eyes upon the golden decline of Athens with the same unquestioning earnestness, as if you were transported all at once to one of the sunny slopes of Hymettus. I speak of Athens, —for it is there surely that the artist must have felt most, and it is in the large picture he has already finished of Athens, that the spirit of the place, the *Religio Loci*, seems to have infused its deepest charm into the pencil of the worshipper. Before you lies a long level of green and yellow grain, broken everywhere by tufted plantations of vines and olives—with here and there a solitary oak or sycamore, lifting itself broader and browner above their underwood—in the midst of which the gigantic Corinthian columns of what was once the Temple of Jupiter, form a resting-place of radiance half way between you and the city. The low roofs and fantastic outlines of the houses of the modern city spread along the verge of the hill, and separate it from the fore-

ground; but the majestic remains behind seem to acknowledge little connection with the works of modern men, which intervene between us and their surpassing beauty. The whole brow of the Acropolis still beams with a labyrinth of splendour, which at first glance you could hardly suspect to be in decay—with such noble decision of outline do these yellow pillars break the sky behind them—towers, and gateways, and temples, and domes, and porticos, all gleaming together on the summit, in the same warmth of radiance that shone upon them when Pericles walked thither to offer up incense before the new-made masterpiece of Phidias. The Temple of Theseus stands lower down, more entire than the Parthenon but half lost in the shadow of the Acropolis. Behind, through a rich and wooded plain that stretches to the sea, the eye may trace some lingering vestiges of what once were the long walls of the Piræeus. The sea itself sleeps bright and blue beyond—beneath a bright sky, where not one speck of cloud is seen to hover above the glorious landscape. Far behind lies Salamis, and farther still Ægina.—In the centre of the piece, on the left hand, a small sheep-track, scarcely discernible among the mossy green, shows where once lay the high road to

Marathon. To the right, close beneath where you stand, a groupe of Turks and Albanians are clustered together, with all the glaring hues of their barbaric splendour by a clear small pool—

> " Thy banks, Cephisus, and the crystal lymph,
> With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lips,
> And moisten all day long these flowery fields."

What a landscape is here! how naked of men, yet how impregnated with the essence of humanity!

> Τας ἱερας ὁπως προσει-
> -ποιμεν Αθανας.—

And yet perhaps the view from Castri may be a still more delightful one, and fitted perhaps to kindle yet deeper emotions. Here there is no pomp of ruins, no sweep of deserted richness, nothing but a few moss-grown tablets and columns beneath our feet, and before us, the mountain of inspiration, lifting its clear head high among the clouds, far above all its sweeping girdle of rocks and pines. It was here that the religion of Greece had its seat and centre—it was from hence that the Oracle of Apollo once dictated to all the kings of Asia—and that far later, even the relics of its power were sufficient to

protect its soil from the foot of the spoiler—when

"The Gaul-King before Delphi lay."

The streams of Castalie glitter in the distance, and a single snow-white heifer, the only living thing in all the picture, browses upon the tall grass and wall-flowers, that spring from out the centre of the long silent sanctuary. A certain dim and sultry vapour of mystery seems to sleep upon everything around—a dreamy mistiness of atmosphere, fit mother and fit nurse for the most fanciful and graceful of superstitions.

—In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman stretched
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
With music lulled his indolent repose:
And in some fit of weariness, if he,
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,
A beardless youth, who touched a golden lute,
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.

The nightly hunter lifting up his eyes
Toward the crescent Moon with grateful heart,
Called on the lovely wanderer, who bestowed
That timely light, to share his joyous sport:

And hence a beaming goddess with her nymphs,
Across the lawn, and through the darksome grove,
(Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes,
By echo multiplied from rock or cave),
Swept in the storm of chase, as Moon and Stars
Glance rapidly along the cloudy Heavens,
When winds are blowing strong:
———————— The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked
The Naiad.—Sunbeams upon distant hills,
Gliding apace with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed
Into fleet Oreads sporting visibly;
The Zephyrs fanning as they passed their wings,
Lacked not for love fair objects, which they wooed
With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,
From depth of shaggy covert, peeping forth
In the low vale, or on steep mountain side;
And sometimes intermixed with stirring horns
Of the live deer, or goats' depending beard;
These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood
Of gamesome Deities, or Pan himself,
The simple Shepherd's awe-inspiring God!

When Williams has finished a few more pictures such as these, I have no doubt it will be found, that his genius is entitled to exert a deep sway over the minds of his contemporaries. It seems as if nature had fitted him to complete among us the impression, which similar inspirations had already enabled one of the greatest

poets of the day to introduce to us with so much majesty of effect.

But the length of these remarks must not lead you to suppose, that there are no great landscape painters in Edinburgh besides Mr Williams. He is the only one whom I have met frequently in society, and perhaps his very elegant appearance and manners, and the interest his wanderings have given to his conversation, may sufficiently account for this circumstance. But there is no want of admirable artists in the same department in this city. There is the venerable father of landscape-painting in Scotland—Mr Nasmyth, whose son Peter enjoys a splendid reputation at present in London. There is a delightful sweetness in the old man's pencil, and assuredly there is in it as yet no want of vigour. There is Mr Thomson, the clergyman of Duddingston, a village in the immediate neighbourhood of Edinburgh, whose works, in masterly ease and breadth of effect, seem to me to approach nearer to the masterpieces of Turner, than those of any other artist with whom I am acquainted, and who, you will be happy to observe, is engaged along with that Prince of Artists in Mr Scott's great work of the Provincial Antiquities of Scotland. Among the younger

artists, there are, I believe, not a few of very great promise, and one, above all, who bids fair ere long to rival the very highest masters in the department he has selected. I allude to Staff-Surgeon Schetky, a gentleman, whose close and eminent attention to his own profession, both here and while he served with Lord Wellington's army, have not prevented him from cultivating with uniform ardour an art fitted above all others to form a delightful relaxation from the duties of professional men, and which, it is easy to see, must besides be of great practical and direct utility to a man of his profession. During the longest and most fatiguing marches of our Peninsular army, his active and intelligent mind was still fresh in its worshipping of the forms of nature; finding its best relief from the contemplation of human suffering, in the contemplation of those serene beauties of earth and sky, which that lovely region for ever offers to the weary eye of man. I think the Doctor is a very original painter. He has looked on nature with an eye that is entirely his own, and he has conceived the true purposes of his art in a way that is scarcely less peculiar. He seems to have the most exalted views of the poetical power of landscape-painting, and to make it his

object on every occasion to call this poetical power into action in his works. He does not so much care to represent merely striking or beautiful scenes, as to characterize natural objects, and bring out their life and expression. A painter, who feels, as he does, what nature is, considers every tree or plant as in some measure an animated being, which expresses the tone of its sensations by the forms which it assumes, and the colours which it displays. How full of poetry and meaning is every vegetable production, when sprouting forth spontaneously in such places as nature dictates, and growing in the way to which it is led by its own silent inclinations! Even the different surfaces and shapes of soils and rocks have an expression relating to the manner in which they were formed, although they cannot be literally considered as expressive of sensation like plants. Mr Schetky seems more than almost any painter to be imbued with these ideas of universal animation. His trees—his rocks—his Pyrenees, seem to breathe and be alive with the spirit of their Maker; and he has no superior, but one, in everything that regards the grand and mysterious eloquence of cloud and sky.

As you have seen the London Exhibitions as often as myself, you of course do not need to be told, that, in Raeburn, Edinburgh possesses a portrait-painter, whose works would do honour to any capital in Europe. I really am not certain, that this artist is in any important particular inferior even to Sir Thomas Lawrence. He also is an old man; but the splendid example of his career has raised about him several, that seem destined to tread in his steps with gracefulness scarcely less than his own. Such, in particular, are Mr Geddes, whose fine portrait of Mr Wilkie has lately been engraved in London—Mr John Watson, a very young artist, but (I prophesy) not far from very splendid reputation—a most chaste colourist, and one that wants nothing but a little more practice to be in all things a Raeburn—and, lastly, Mr Nicholson, whose delicate taste in conceiving a subject, and general felicity in executing it, do not always receive so much praise as they should, on account of a little carelessness in regard to drawing, which might be very easily corrected. You must have seen many etchings from his pictures. Mr Nicholson is also a very charming miniature-painter; indeed, he has no rival in that de-

partment but Mr William Thomson, a truly delicious master in this style.

Ever your's,

P. M.

P. S. You must not expect to hear from me again for several days, as I am to set off to-morrow morning to pay my promised visit to Mr S——. I shall write you immediately on my return to Edinburgh.

Pray, is there any truth in the newspaper paragraph about Sir Watkin?—Give my love to Lucy—" *Quid Luce clarius?*"

LETTER LI.

TO THE SAME.

OMAN'S.

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AFTER passing the town of Dalkeith, and all along the skirts of the same lovely tract of scenery on the Esk, which I have already described to you, the road to Abbotsford leads for several miles across a bare and sterile district, where the progress of cultivation has not yet been able to change much of the general aspect of the country. There are, however, here and there some

beautiful little valleys cutting the desert—in one of which, by the side of a small mountain stream, whose banks are clothed everywhere with a most picturesque abundance of blooming furze, the old Castle of Borthwick is seen projecting its venerable Keep, unbroken apparently, and almost undecayed, over the few oaks which still seem to linger like so many frail faithful vassals around the relics of its grandeur. When I passed by this fine ruin, the air was calm and the sky unclouded, and the shadow of the square massy pile lay in all its clear breadth upon the blue stream below; but Turner has caught or created perhaps still more poetical accompaniments, and you may see it to at least as much advantage as I did, in his magnificent delineation.*

Shortly after this the view becomes more contracted, and the road winds for some miles between the hills—while, upon the right, you have close by your side a modest little rivulet, increasing, however, every moment in breadth and boldness. This is the infant *Gala Water*—

* In the first Number of the Provincial Antiquities of Scotland.

so celebrated in the pastoral poetry of Scotland —flowing on to mingle its tributary stream with the more celebrated Tweed. As you approach, with it, the great valley of that delightful river, the hills become more and more beautiful in their outlines, and where they dip into the narrow plain, their lower slopes are diversified with fine groupes of natural wood—hazel—ash—and birch, with here and there some drooping, mouldering oaks and pines, the scanty relics of that once mighty *Forest*, from which the whole district still takes its name. At last, the Gala makes a sudden turn, and instead of

> "The grace of forest-charms decayed,
> And pastoral melancholy,"

you have a rich and fertile vale, covered all over with nodding groves and luxuriant verdure, through which the Gala winds proudly towards the near end of its career. I crossed it at the thriving village of Galashiels, and pursued my journey for a mile or two on its right bank —being told, that I should thus save a considerable distance—for the usual road goes round about for the sake of a bridge, which, in the placid seasons of the Tweed, is quite unnecessary.

I saw this far-famed river for the first time, with the turrets of its great poet's mansion immediately beyond it, and the bright foliage of his young larches reflected half-way over in its mirror.

You cannot imagine a more lovely river—it is as clear as the tiniest brook you ever saw, for I could count the white pebbles as I passed—and yet it is broad and deep, and above all extremely rapid; and although it rises sometimes to a much greater height, it seems to fill the whole of its bed magnificently. The ford of which I made use, is the same from which the house takes its name, and a few minutes brought me to its gates. Ere I came to it, however, I had time to see that it is a strange fantastic structure, built in total defiance of all those rules of uniformity to which the modern architects of Scotland are so much attached. It consists of one large tower, with several smaller ones clustering around it, all built of fine gray granite—their roofs diversified abundantly with all manner of antique chimney-tops, battlements, and turrets—the windows placed here and there with appropriate irregularity, both of dimension and position—and the spaces between or above them not unfrequently occupied with saintly niches, and chivalrous coats-of-arms. Altogether it bears a close

resemblance to some of our true old English manor-houses, in which the forms of religious and warlike architecture are blended together with no ungraceful mixture. But I have made a sketch with my pencil, which will give you a better notion of its exterior, than any written description. The interior is perfectly in character—but I dare say, you would turn the leaf were I to detain you any longer from the lord of the place, and I confess you are right in thinking him "metal more attractive."

I did not see Mr Scott, however, immediately on my arrival; he had gone out with all his family, to shew the Abbey of Melrose to the Count von Bulow, and some other visitors. I was somewhat dusty in my apparel (for the shandrydan had moved in clouds half the journey), so I took the opportunity of making my toilet, and had not quite completed it, when I heard the trampling of their horses' feet beneath the window. But in a short time, having finished my adonization, I descended, and was conducted to Mr Scott, whom I found alone in his library. Nothing could be kinder than his reception of me,—and so simple and unassuming are his manners, that I was quite surprised, after a few minutes had elapsed,

to find myself already almost at home in the company of one, whose presence I had approached with feelings so very different from those with which a man of my age and experience is accustomed to meet ordinary strangers. There is no kind of rank, which I should suppose it so difficult to bear with perfect ease, as the universally-honoured nobility of universally-honoured genius; but all this sits as lightly and naturally upon this great man, as ever a plumed casque did upon the head of one of his own graceful knights. Perhaps, after all, the very highest dignity may be more easily worn than some of the inferior degrees—as it has often been said of princes. My Lord Duke is commonly a much more homely person than the Squire of the Parish—or your little spick-and-span new Irish Baron. And, good heavens! what a difference between the pompous Apollo of some Cockney coterie, and the plain, manly, thorough-bred courtesy of a Walter Scott!

There was a large party at dinner, for the house was full of company, and much very amusing and delightful conversation passed on every side around me; but you will not wonder that I found comparatively little leisure either to

hear or see much of anything besides my host. And as to his person, in the first place—that was almost perfectly new to me, although I must have seen, I should suppose, some dozens of engravings of him before I ever came to Scotland. Never was any physiognomy treated with more scanty justice by the portrait-painters—and yet, after all, I must confess that the physiognomy is of a kind that scarcely falls within the limits of their art. I have never seen any face which disappointed me less than this, after I had become acquainted with it fully—yet, at the first glance, I certainly saw less than, but for the vile prints, I should have looked for—and I can easily believe that the feelings of the uninitiated—the uncranioscopical observer, might be little different from those of pure disappointment. It is not that there is deficiency of expression in any part of Mr Scott's face, but the expression which is most prominent, is not of the kind which one who had known his works, and had heard nothing about his appearance, would be inclined to expect. The common language of his features expresses all manner of discernment and acuteness of intellect, and the utmost nerve and decision of character. He smiles frequently, and I never saw any smile which tells so elo-

quently the union of broad good humour, with the keenest perception of the ridiculous—but all this would scarcely be enough to satisfy one in the physiognomy of Walter Scott. And, indeed, in order to see much finer things in it, it is only necessary to have a little patience,

> ——" And tarry for the hour,
> When the Wizard shews his power;
> The hour of might and mastery,
> Which none may shew but only he."

In the course of conversation, he happened to quote a few lines from one of the old Border Ballads, and, looking round, I was quite astonished with the change which seemed to have passed over every feature in his countenance. His eyes seemed no longer to glance quick and gray from beneath his impending brows, but were fixed in their expanded eye-lids with a sober, solemn lustre. His mouth (the muscles about which are at all times wonderfully expressive,) instead of its usual language of mirth or benevolence, or shrewdness, was filled with a sad and pensive earnestness. The whole face was tinged with a glow that shewed its lines in new energy and transparence, and the thin hair parting backward displayed in tenfold majesty his Shakespearian pile of forehead. It was now that

I recognized the true stamp of Nature on the Poet of Marmion—and looking back for a moment to the former expression of the same countenance, I could not choose but wonder at the facility with which one set of features could be made to speak things so different. But, after all, what are features unless they form the index to the mind? and how should the eyes of him who commands a thousand kinds of emotion, be themselves confined to beam only with the eloquence of a few?—

> " It was about the Lammas tide,
> When husbandmen do win their hay;
> The doughty Douglas he would ride
> Into England to drive a prey."

I shall certainly never forget the fine heroic enthusiasm of look, with which he spoke these lines—nor the grand melancholy roll of voice, which shewed with what a world of thoughts and feelings every fragment of the old legend was associated within his breast. It seemed as if one single cadence of the ancestral strain had been charm enough to transport his whole spirit back into the very pride and presence of the moment, when the White Lion of the Percies was stained and trampled under foot beside the bloody rushes

of Otterbourne. The more than martial fervours of his kindled eye, were almost enough to give to the same lines the same magic in my ears; and I could half fancy that the portion of Scottish blood which is mingled in my veins, had begun to assert, by a more ardent throb, its right to partake in the triumphs of the same primitive allegiance.

While I was thus occupied, one of the most warlike of the Lochaber pibrochs began to be played in the neighbourhood of the room in which we were, and, looking towards the window, I saw a noble Highland piper parading to and fro upon the lawn, in front of the house—the plumes of his bonnet—the folds of his plaid—and the streamers of his bag-pipe, all floating majestically about him in the light evening breeze. You have seen this magnificent costume, so I need not trouble you either with its description or its eulogy; but I am quite sure you never saw it where its appearance harmonized so delightfully with all the accompaniments of the scene. It is true, that it was in the Lowlands—and that there are other streams upon which the shadow of the tartans might fall with more of the propriety of mere antiquarianism,

than on the Tweed. But the Scotch are right in not now-a-days splitting too much the symbols of their nationality; as they have ceased to be an independent people, they do wisely in striving to be as much as possible an united people. But here, above all, whatever was truly Scottish could not fail to be truly appropriate in the presence of the great genius to whom whatever is Scottish in thought, in feeling, or in recollection, owes so large a share of its prolonged, or reanimated, or ennobled existence. The poet of Roderick Dhu, and—under favour—the poet of Fergus Mac-Ivor, does well assuredly to have a piper among the retainers of his hospitable mansion. You remember, too, how he has himself described the feast of the Rhymer:—

> "Nor lacked they, as they sat at dine,
> *The Music*, nor the tale,
> Nor goblets of the blood-red wine,
> Nor mantling quaighs of ale."

After the Highlander had played some dozen of his tunes, he was summoned, according to the ancient custom, to receive the thanks of the company. He entered *more militari*, without taking off his bonnet, and received a huge tass of aquavitæ from the hand of his master, after which he withdrew again—the most per-

fect solemnity all the while being displayed in his weather-beaten, but handsome and warlike Celtic lineaments. The inspiration of the generous fluid prompted one strain merrier than the rest, behind the door of the Hall, and then the piper was silent—his lungs, I dare say, consenting much more than his will, for he has all the appearance of being a fine enthusiast in the delights and dignity of his calling. So much for Roderick of Skye, for such I think is his style.

His performance seemed to diffuse, or rather to heighten, a charming flow of geniality over the whole of the party, but nowhere could I trace its influence so powerfully and so delightfully as in the Master of the Feast. The music of the hills had given a new tone to his fine spirits, and the easy playfulness with which he gave vent to their buoyancy, was the most delicious of contagions. Himself temperate in the extreme (some late ill health has made it necessary he should be so,) he sent round his claret more speedily than even I could have wished—(you see I am determined to blunt the edge of all your sarcasms)—and I assure you we were all too well employed to think of measuring our bumpers. Do not suppose, however, that there is anything like display or formal leading in Mr Scott's conversation. On the contrary, every

body seemed to speak the more that He was there to hear—and his presence seemed to be enough to make every body speak delightfully—as if it had been that some princely musician had tuned all the strings, and even under the sway of more vulgar fingers, they could not choose but discourse excellent music. His conversation, besides, is for the most part of such a kind, that all can take a lively part in it, although, indeed, none that I ever met with can equal himself. It does not appear as if he ever could be at a loss for a single moment for some new supply of that which constitutes its chief peculiarity, and its chief charm; the most keen perception, the most tenacious memory, and the most brilliant imagination, having been at work throughout the whole of his busy life, in filling his mind with a store of individual traits and anecdotes, serious and comic, individual and national, such as it is probable no man ever before possessed—and such, still more certainly, as no man of great original power ever before possessed in subservience to the purposes of inventive genius. A youth spent in wandering among the hills and valleys of his country, during which he became intensely familiar with all the lore of those gray-haired shepherds, among whom the

traditions of warlike as well as of peaceful times find their securest dwelling-place—or in more equal converse with the relics of that old school of Scottish cavaliers, whose faith had nerved the arms of so many of his own race and kindred—such a boyhood and such a youth laid the foundation, and established the earliest and most lasting sympathies of a mind, which was destined, in after years, to erect upon this foundation, and improve upon these sympathies, in a way of which his young and thirsting spirit could have then contemplated but little. Through his manhood of active and honoured, and now for many years of glorious exertion, he has always lived in the world, and among the men of the world, partaking in all the pleasures and duties of society as fully as any of those who had nothing but such pleasures and such duties to attend to. Uniting, as never before they were united, the habits of an indefatigable student with those of an indefatigable observer—and doing all this with the easy and careless grace of one who is doing so, not to task, but to gratify his inclinations and his nature—is it to be wondered that the riches of his various acquisitions should furnish a never-failing source of admiration even to those who have known him the longest, and who know

him the best? As for me, enthusiastic as I had always been in my worship of his genius—and well as his works had prepared me to find his conversation rich to overflowing in all the elements of instruction as well as of amusement—I confess the reality entirely surpassed all my anticipations, and I never despised the maxim *Nil admirari* so heartily as now.

I can now say what I believe very few of my friends can do, that I have conversed with almost all the illustrious poets our contemporaries—indeed, Lord Byron is the only exception that occurs to me. Surely I need not tell you that I met each and all of them with every disposition to be gratified—and now I cannot but derive great pleasure from being able to look back upon what I have so been privileged to witness, and comparing in my own mind their different styles of conversation. The most original and interesting, as might be supposed, in this point of view, are the same whose originality has been most conspicuous in other things—this great Poet of Scotland, and the great Poet of the Lakes. It is, indeed, a very striking thing, how much the conversation of each of these men harmonizes with the peculiar vein of his mind, as displayed in more elaborate shapes—how *one*

and entire the impression is, which the totality of each of them is calculated to leave upon the mind of an honouring, but not a bigotted observer. In listening to Wordsworth, it is impossible to forget for a single moment that the author of "The Excursion" is before you. Poetry has been with him the pure sole business of life—he thinks of nothing else, and he speaks of nothing else—and where is the man who hears him, that would for a moment wish it to be otherwise? The deep sonorous voice in which he pours forth his soul upon the high secrets of his divine art—and those tender glimpses which he opens every now and then into the bosom of that lowly life, whose mysteries have been his perpetual inspirations--the sincere earnestness with which he details and expatiates—the innocent confidence which he feels in the heart that is submitted to his working—and the unquestioning command with which he seeks to fasten to him every soul that is capable of understanding his words—all these things are as they should be, in one that has lived the life of a hermit—musing, and meditating, and composing in the seclusion of a lonely cottage—loving and worshipping the Nature of Man, but partaking little in the pursuits, and knowing little of the habits, of the Men of the World.

There is a noble simplicity in the warmth with which he discourses to all that approach him, on the subject of which he himself knows most, and on which he feels most—and of which he is wise enough to know that every one must be most anxious to hear him speak. His poetry is the poetry of external nature and profound feeling, and such is the hold which these high themes have taken of his intellect, that he seldom dreams of descending to the tone in which the ordinary conversation of men is pitched. Hour after hour his eloquence flows on, by his own simple fireside, or along the breezy slopes of his own mountains, in the same lofty strain as in his loftiest poems—

> " Of man and Nature, and of human life,
> His haunt and the main region of his song."

His enthusiasm is that of a secluded artist; but who is he that would not rejoice in being permitted to peep into the sanctity of such a seclusion—or that, being there, would wish for a moment to see the enthusiasm that has sanctified it, suspended or interrupted in its work? The large, dim, pensive eye, that dwells almost for ever upon the ground, and the smile of placid abstraction, that clothes his long, tremulous, me-

lancholy lips, complete a picture of solemn, wrapped-up contemplative genius, to which, amid the dusty concussions of active men and common life, my mind reverts sometimes for repose, as to a fine calm stretch of verdure in the bosom of some dark and hoary forest of venerable trees, where no voice is heard but that of the sweeping wind, and far-off waters—what the Ettrick Shepherd finely calls

——— "Great Nature's hum,
Voice of the desert, never dumb."

Scott, again, is the very poet of active life, and that life, in all its varieties, lies for ever stretched out before him, bright and expanded, as in the glass of a magician. Whatever subject be mentioned, he at once steals a beam from his mirror, and scatters such a flood of illustration upon it, that you feel as if it had always been mantled in palpable night before. Every remark gains, as it passes from his lips, the precision of a visible fact, and every incident flashes upon your imagination, as if your bodily eye, by some new gift of nature, had acquired the power of seeing the past as vividly as the present. To talk of exhausting his light of *gramourie* to one that witnessed its play of radiance, would sound

as absurd as to talk of drying up the Nile. It streams alike copiously, alike fervently upon all things, like the light of heaven, which "shineth upon the evil and upon the good." The eye, and the voice, and the words, and the gestures, seem all alike to be the ready unconscious interpreters of some imperial spirit, that moves irresistibly their mingled energies from within. There is no effort—no semblance of effort—but everything comes out as is commanded—swift, clear, and radiant through the impartial medium. The heroes of the old times spring from their graves in panoply, and "drink the red wine through the helmet barred" before us; or

> "Shred their foemen's limbs away,
> As lops the woodman's knife the spray."

—But they are honoured, not privileged—the humblest retainers quit the dust as full of life as they do—nay, their dogs and horses are partakers in the resurrection, like those of the Teutonic warriors in the Valhalla of Odin. It is no matter what period of his country's story passes in review. Bruce—Douglas—their Kingly Foe, in whose

> ——"eye was set
> Some spark of the Plantagenet."

James—Mary—Angus—Montrose—Argyle—Dundee—these are all alike, not names, but realities—living, moving, breathing, feeling, speaking, looking realities—when he speaks of them. The grave loses half its potency when he calls. His own imagination is one majestic sepulchre, where the wizard lamp burns in never-dying splendour, and the charmed blood glows for ever in the cheeks of the embalmed, and every long-sheathed sword is ready to leap from its scabbard, like the Tizona of the Cid in the vault of Cardena.—Of all this more anon.

P. M.

LETTER LII.

TO THE SAME.

Next morning I got up pretty early, and walked for at least two hours before breakfast through the extensive young woods with which Mr Scott has already clothed the banks of the Tweed, in every direction about his mansion. Nothing can be more soft and beautiful than the whole of the surrounding scenery; there is scarcely a single house to be seen, and excepting on the rich low lands, close by the river, the country seems to be almost entirely in the hands of the shepherds. The green hills, however, all around the horizon, begin to be skirted with sweeping plantations of larch, pine, and oak; and the shelter which these will soon afford, must no doubt ere long give a more agricultural aspect to the face of Tweeddale. To say the truth, I do

not think with much pleasure of the prospect of any such changes—I love to see tracts of countries, as well as races of men, preserving as much as possible of their old characteristics. There hovers at present over the most of this district a certain delicious atmosphere of pastoral loneliness, and I think there would be something like sacrilege in disturbing it, even by things that elsewhere would confer interest as well as ornament.

After a breakfast *à la fourchette*, served up in the true style of old Scottish luxury, which a certain celebrated Novelist seems to take a particular pleasure in describing—a breakfast, namely, in which tea, coffee, chocolate, toast, and sweetmeats, officiated as little better than ornamental out-works to more solid and imposing fortifications of mutton-ham, hung-beef, and salmon killed over-night in the same spear and torch-light method, of which Dandie Dinmont was so accomplished a master—after doing all manner of justice to this interesting meal, I spent an hour with Mr Scott in his library, or rather in his closet; for, though its walls are quite covered with books, I believe the far more valuable part of his library is in Edinburgh. One end

seemed to be devoted to books of Scots Law—which are necessary to him no doubt even here; for he is Chief Magistrate of the county—and, indeed, is known among the country people, who passionately love him, by no other name than that of "the Sherra." The other books, so far as I could see, were just what I should have expected to find Mr Scott draw round him in his retirement—not the new and flashy productions of the day, but good plain copies of the old English Classics—above all, the historians and poets—together with a copious intermixture of black-letter romances, and Spanish ballads of chivalry, and several shelves entirely filled with the best collection I have ever seen of German *Volksmärchen* and *Volkslieder*. Among these, no doubt, his mind has found, at once, useful employment, and delightful relaxation.

We then mounted our horses, a numerous cavalcade, and rode to one of the three summits of the Eildon Hill, which rises out of the plain a little way behind Abbotsford, and forms, in almost every point of view, a glorious back-ground to its towers and rising woods. We passed, before leaving Mr Scott's territories, a deep dingle, quite covered with all manner of wild bushes, through which a little streamlet far below could,

for the most part, be rather heard than seen. Mr Scott paused at the rustic bridge which led us over this ravine, and told me, that I was treading on classical ground—that here was the *Huntly Burn*, by whose side Thomas the Rhymer of old saw the Queen of Faery riding in her glory, and called to this hour by the shepherds, from that very circumstance, the *Bogle* or *Goblin Burn*. He then went on to repeat the fine words of the original *Prophesia Thomæ de Ercildoune*.

> " In a land as I was lent,
> In the gryking of the day,
> Ay alone as I went
> In Huntly bankys me for to play:
> I saw the throstyl and the jay,
> The mavis moved of her sange,
> The wodwale sang notes gay,
> That all the wood about range:
> In that longing as I lay
> Underneath a derne tree,
> I was aware of a ladye fair
> Cam riding over a fair lee—
> Her palfray was dappil graye,
> Such one saw never none,
> As the sun in somer's day,
> All about that ladye shone," &c. &c.

I could not but express my delight to find, that the scene of so many romantic recollections was included within the domains of the great

inheritor of the glories of "True Thomas," and promised to myself to pay a more leisurely visit to Huntly Bank and the Goblin Burn. From this we passed right up the hill, the ponies here being as perfectly independent as our own of turnpike ways, and as scornful of perpendicular ascents. I was not a little surprised, however, with Mr Scott's horsemanship—for, in spite of the lameness in one of his legs, he manages his steed with the most complete mastery, and seems to be as much at home in the saddle, as any of his own rough-riding Deloraines or Lochinvars could have been. He is, indeed, a very strong man in all the rest of his frame—the breadth and massiness of his iron muscles being evidently cast in the same mould with those of the old "Wats of Harden," and "Bauld Rutherfuirds that were fow stout." We took several ditches that would have astonished nine-tenths of the Epping sportsmen, and he was always foremost at the leap. All around the top of the hill, there may be seen the remains of Roman walls and ditches, which seem to have been brought very low down in one direction, in order to inclose a fine well—and, indeed, the very peculiar outline of the Eildon leaves no doubt, that it was the *Trimontium* of antiquity. The transi-

tory visits of a few Roman legions, however, did not seem to me to confer much additional interest on this noble mountain, from whose summits the scenes of so many Scottish and English battles may be seen. The name of every hill and every valley all around is poetical, and I felt, as I heard them pointed out one by one, as if so many old friends had been introduced to my acquaintance after a long absence, in which I had thought of them all a thousand times. To the left, at the foot of the hill, lies the picturesque village of Melrose, with the Abbots-Law, or Court-Mount, swelling close behind, and between it and the Tweed, the long gray arches of the magnificent Abbey itself. The river winds away for some miles among a rich succession of woods and lawns, at the end of which the fraternal towers of Dryburgh lift themselves from among their groves of elm.

——— "Dryborough, where with chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus."

The back-ground on this side consists, among other fine hills, of the Colding Knowes, so celebrated in Border song—on the other side, there is Ruberslaw, and the Carter, and Dunyon; and farther off, the Cheviots—and all between the

beautiful windings of the Teviot. Right before my eye, Mr Scott pointed out a small round tower, perched upon some irregular crags, at the distance of some few miles—Smaylholm Tower,—the scene of the Eve of St John, and, what is still better, the scene of the early youth of the Poet himself. It was here, he told me, that in years of feebleness, which afforded little hope of the vigorous manhood which has followed them, he was entrusted to the care of some ancient female relations, who, in watching by his side, were never weary of chaunting, to the sad music of the Border, the scattered relics of that Minstrelsy of Love and War, which he himself has since gathered and preserved with so pious veneration. The situation of the Tower must be charming. I remember of no poet whose infancy was passed in so poetical a scene. But he has touched all this most gracefully himself:

"He passed the court-gate, and he oped the tower-grate,
And he mounted the narrow stair,
To the bartizan seat, where with maids that on her wait,
He found his Lady fair.

"That Lady sat in mournful mood,
Looked over hill and vale,
O'er Tweed's fair flood, and Mertoun's wood,
And all down Teviotdale."

Turning again to the left, Mr Scott pointed out to me an opening in the hills, where the Leader comes down to mingle with the Tweed—by whose side the remains of the Rhymer's old castle are yet, I believe, to be seen; although, in conformity with one of the Rhymer's own prophecies, the hall is deserted, and the land has passed to other blood.* The whole scene has been embraced by Mr Scott himself, in the opening of one of his finest ballads:—

"When seven years more were come and gone,
Was war through Scotland spread;
And Ruberslaw showed high Dunyon
His beacon blazing red.

"Then all by bonny Colding Know,
Pitched pallions took their room;
And crested helms and spears a-rowe,
Glanced gaily through the broom.

"The Leader, rolling to the Tweed,
Resounds the enzenzie;
They roused the deer from Caddenhead,
To distant Torwoodlee.

"The feast was spread in Ercildoune,
In Learmont's high and ancient hall;
And there were knights of high renown,
And ladies laced in pall," &c. &c.

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* "The hare sall kittle on my hearth-stane,
And there never sall be Laird Learmont again."

But if I were to quote all the poetry connected with the scenes among which I now stood—in truth, my letter might easily become a volume.

After we had fairly descended the hill, we found that much more time had passed than we had thought of—and with me, indeed, I know not that time ever passed more delightfully—so we made haste and returned at a high trot—the chiding echoes of the dinner-bell coming to us long ere we reached Abbotsford,—

"Swinging slow with sullen roar."

The evening passed as charmingly as the preceding. The younger part of the company danced reels to the music of the bag-pipe, and I believe I would have been tempted to join them, but for some little twitches I had in my left foot. Indeed, I still fear the good cheer of the North is about to be paid for in the usual way; but Heaven send the reckoning may not be a long one. At all events, I am glad the fit did not overtake me in the country, for I should have been sorry to give my company to anybody but Mr Oman during the visitation.

P. M.

LETTER LIII.

TO THE SAME.

Another morning was devoted to visiting, under the same best of all Cicerones, the two famous ruins of Melrose and Dryburgh, which I had seen from a distance, when on the top of the Eildon. The Abbey of Melrose has been so often the subject of the pencil of exquisite artists —and of late, above all, so much justice has been done to its beauties by Mr Blore, that I need not trouble you with any description of its general effect. The glorious Oriel Window, on which the moon is made to stream in the Lay of the Last Minstrel, is almost as familiar to you as if yourself had seen it—and so, indeed, must be the whole of the most striking outlines of this venerable pile. But there is one thing about it of which you can have no idea—at least, I had

none till I came to the spot—I mean the unrivalled richness and minuteness of all the decorations. Everywhere, without and within, the doors and windows are surrounded with specimens of sculpture, at once so delicately conceived, and so beautifully executed, that it would be quite ridiculous to compare them with any thing I ever saw, even in the most magnificent remains of Gothic architecture in England or Normandy. There is one cloister, in particular, along the whole length of which there runs a cornice of flowers and plants, entirely unrivalled, to my mind, by anything elsewhere extant—I do not say in Gothic architecture merely, but in any architecture whatever. Roses, and lilies, and thistles, and ferns, and heaths, in all their varieties, and oak-leaves and ash-leaves, and a thousand beautiful shapes besides, are chiselled with such inimitable truth, and such grace of nature, that the finest botanist in the world could not desire a better hortus siccus, so far as they go. The wildest productions of the forest, and the most delicate ones of the garden, are represented with equal fidelity and equal taste—and they are all arranged and combined in such a way, that it is evident they were placed there

under the eye of some most skilful admirer of all the beauties of external Nature. Nay, there is a human hand in another part, holding a garland loosely in the fingers, which, were it cut off, and placed among the Elgin Marbles, would, I am quite sure, be kissed by the cognoscenti as one of the finest of them all. Nothing can be more simply—more genuinely easy—more full of expression. It would shame the whole gallery of the Boisserées. And yet all this was the work of an age, which the long-headed Presbyterians round about are pleased to talk of in a tone of contempt, scarcely compatible even with pity. Alas! how easy it is to be satisfied with ourselves, when there is no capacity to understand the works of others.

The ruin has been sadly disfigured in former times, by the patch-work repairs of some disciples of the Covenant, who fitted up part of the nave for a place of worship, long after the arches that supported the original roof had given way in that quarter. Such was the perfection of their barbarity, that they sprung new arches in the midst of this exquisite church, entirely devoid, not only of correspondence with that which they were meant to repair, but of conformity

with any of the most simple rules of the art—rude clumsy circles, deforming with their sacrilegious intrusion, one of the most airy canopies of stone that was ever hung on high by the hand of human skill—memorable trophies of the triumph of self-complacent ignorance. Surely it was beneath the shadow of some such outrage as this, that the bones of John Knox would have found their most grateful repose! But the Presbyterians have now removed from the precincts of the old sanctuary; and the miserable little kirk they have erected at the distance of a few fields, does not disturb the impression of its awful beauty. The Abbey itself stands on the ground of the Duke of Buccleuch, who has enclosed it carefully, so that what yet remains is likely to remain long as beautiful as it is.

It must have been, in its perfect days, a building of prodigious extent—for even the church (of which only a part is standing) stretches over a larger space than that of Tintern—and there is no question, the accommodations of the lordly Abbot and his brethren must have been in a suitable style of magnificence. All about the walls and outskirts of the place, may yet be seen scattered knots of garden-flowers, springing up among the tall grass—and the old apple-trees

that cluster the village around, are equally the relics of monastic cultivation. The long flat burial-ground to the east and south, receives the shadows of the shattered pillars and arches, as quietly as it did when all their beauty was entire—it is the only accompaniment of the scene, which remains in use and appearance such as it ever was. Within, too, the ancient families of the Forest still preserve the same resting-places, to which the piety of their forefathers established their right. Kers, Scotts, Pringles, Elliots,—they all sleep here each in their own antique aisle—the same venerable escutcheon carved or molten above the dust of every succeeding generation.

After I had seen as much of this grand Abbey as one visit would admit of, we mounted our horses again, and rode to Dryburgh (a distance of four or five miles only), all the way keeping close to the windings of the Tweed. This edifice stands on a peninsula, the river making a circuit almost quite round its precincts, and behind its towers the whole slope of the hills is covered with oaks, pines, and elms, that shed a solemn gloom upon the ruin—quite different from the soft, undisturbed, unshaded loveliness of Melrose. We passed the river by means of a bridge of

chain-work, very elegant in itself, I dare say, but not quite in taste so near such a scene as Dryburgh.—The bridge is one of the many devices of the Earl of Buchan, who is proprietor of the ground, and indeed has his seat close to the Abbey walls. A huge colossal statue of Sir William Wallace, executed in staring red free-stone, is another of his devices. This monument of the Earl's patriotism is perched very magnificently on the brink of a rock above the river—and must undoubtedly appear a very grand and appropriate thing in the eyes of Cockney visitants; but my admiration, small as it originally was, suffered much further diminution, when I was informed that the base of the statue is made to serve as a pot-house, where a rhyming cobler, one of the noble Lord's many protegées, vends odes, elegies, and whisky, for his own behoof, and the few remaining copies of that charming collection, "the Anonymous and Fugitive Pieces of the Right Honourable the Earl of Buchan," for behoof of his patron.

The ruins are in themselves very superb—although not to be compared in any respect with those I had just been seeing; and the Earl is virtuoso enough to keep them in the main in excellent order. But I confess, the way in which

he has ornamented certain parts of them, was enough to weaken not a little the serious impression which the general view of the whole produced upon my mind. In the midst of one of the desolate courts of the Abbey, he has constructed a spruce little flower-garden, with trim gravel-walks and box-wood edgings;—a few jargonelle pear-trees display their well-clipped branches, nailed in regular lines upon the mouldering walls around, and in the midst of them a tall sign-post lifts its head, and (whether it lies or not I cannot say) proclaims to all whom it may concern, the presence of a less inviting crop —"*Man-traps and spring-guns set in these premises.*" A large bust is placed at one extremity of this cultivated spot, which, at first, I took it for granted, must be Faunus, or Pomona, or Priapus, at the least; but, on drawing near, I recognized at once the fine features of the noble proprietor himself, hewn by some village Phidias, with a measure of resemblance alike honorable to the charms of the subject, and the skill of the artist. A long inscription around the pedestal of the bust, informs us in plain Latin (but I have forgot the precise words), that "*The great Author of our being sends now and then bright spirits among mankind, to vindicate*

his own power, and the dignity of our nature from the scoffs of the impious. I wish I had taken a memorandum of the *ipsissima verba.* After wandering through all the labyrinth of towers and courts, the attendant conducted us into an immense vault, which has been set apart, in the true Dilettanti taste, for the reception of plaster-of-Paris casts of some others of these *bright spirits.* The sober religious light of the place did not at first enable me to recognize what busts they were, but a sudden gleam of sunshine, which occurred very fortunately, soon discovered to me another edition of the same features which I had just been admiring *sub dio.* DAVID BUCHANIÆ COMES occupies the central niche in this

—— "temple, where the great
Are honoured by the nations."

On his right hand he has Homer, and on his left Mr Watt of Birmingham, the inventor of the steam engine. Mæonides again is supported by General Washington, and Mr Watt by Sir Philip Sidney. Shakespeare—Count Rumford—Dr Matthew Baillie—Charles James Fox—Socrates—Cicero—and Provost Creech of Edinburgh—follow on the left; while on the right, the *series*

Heroum is continued with equal propriety by the Author of the Seasons—Lord Nelson—Julius Cæsar—Benjamin Franklin—Mozart—John Knox—Michael Angelo—Aristotle—and a rueful caricature of the Ettrick Shepherd—bearing abundant marks of the agony with which that excellent but unsophisticated person must, no doubt, have submitted to the clammy application of the Savoyard cast-maker. There are some dozens more of worthies dead and living, who partake in the same honours; and altogether the effect of the chalky congregation is as impressive a thing as need be.

In riding back, I received from Mr Scott a good deal of interesting antiquarian information concerning these great religious establishments, of which there is such an uncommon quantity in this district of Scotland—for these two I have spoken of are only the last links of a complete chain of similar buildings, which stretches all along the banks of the Tweed from the border of England. That these rich ecclesiastical foundations were, in their origin, the pure products of piety, I have little doubt; but I as little question, that, in after times, they were found to be eminently useful in a more worldly point of view, and therefore protected and enriched by

the munificence of many successive monarchs, in whose character piety formed but a slender ingredient. The sanctity of the soil, set apart for the support of the Ministers of Religion, was reverenced by the rudest foes that came to seek spoil in Scotland, and it is easy to see what wisdom there was in investing as large a portion as possible of the frontier soil with this protecting character. The internal state of the country, moreover, during those lawless times of baronial feuds, may have rendered the kings of Scotland fond of conferring as many of their richest fiefs as they could with safety on the less turbulent churchmen—a body, on whose general attachment to the cause of loyalty and order, they might always think themselves entitled to depend. As it was, I have no doubt the cultivation of the country throve much more uniformly under the superintendance of the monks and abbots of Kelso, Jedburgh, Dryburgh, and Melrose, than it would have done in any other hands which the times could furnish—and you know these holy men were commonly bound by their tenures to supply the king's banner, either in offensive or defensive warfare, with the full proportion of soldiers which the value of their lands

might seem to render fitting.* The rich abbeys of Northumberland, probably, owed their wealth to similar views of policy—and, perhaps, those on the Wye, and elsewhere along the march of our own principality, may be accounted for in the same way.

P. M.

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* Durham was an exception to this rule. My excellent and learned friend, Mr Surtees of Mainsforth, mentions, that on one occasion, when the tenants of the bishoprick were called upon to contribute their assistance to a royal host advancing upon Scotland, they refused, saying, "We are *haly-werke folk,* and must stay here, where we hold our lands by the tenure of guarding the body of our Bishop St Cuthbert." This plea was admitted.

LETTER LIV.

TO THE SAME.

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After various attempts, I have at last succeeded in making what I am inclined to think a very fair sketch of the head of Mr Walter Scott. I send you a copy of it in pen and ink, on the other side of my sheet, and would hope you may consider it worthy of a double postage. I have made various drawings of him, both in more solemn and more ludicrous moods; but I

think the expression of this comes nearest to the habitual character of his face. Study it well for a few minutes, and then listen to a few of my remarks on the organization of this remarkable man.

In the general form, so very high and conical, and, above all, in the manner in which the forehead goes into the top of the head, there is something which at once tells you that here is the lofty enthusiasm, and passionate veneration for greatness, which must enter into the composition of every illustrious poet. In these respects, Scott bears some resemblance to the busts of Shakespeare—but a much more close resemblance to those of the great Corneille; and surely Corneille was one of the most favoured of all poets, in regard to all that constitutes the true poetic soaring of conception. No minor poet ever approaches to this conformation; it is reserved for "Earth's giant sons" alone. It is lower down, however, that the most peculiar parts of the organization are to be found—or rather those parts, the position of which close beneath these symbols of high poetical impetus, gives to the whole head its peculiar and characteristic expression. The developement of the organ of imitation is

prodigious, and the contiguous organ of pleasantry is scarcely less remarkable. This again leads off the swell into that of imagination, on which the upper region rests, as on a firm and capacious basis. I do not think the head is so long from stem to stern as Lord Byron's, which probably indicates some inferiority in point of profound feeling. Like Lord Byron's, however, the head is in general well brought out in every quarter, and there is a freedom in the air with which it sits upon his shoulders, which shews that Nature is strong in all the different regions—or, in other words, that a natural balance subsists among the various parts of his organization. I have noticed, on the other hand, that people whose strength lies chiefly in one direction, have, for the most part, a stiff and constrained way of holding their heads. Wordsworth, for instance, has the back part of his head—the seat of the personal feelings—small and little expanded, and the consequence is, that there is nothing to weigh against the prodigious mass of mere musing in front—so that his head falls forward in any thing but a graceful way; while, on the other hand, the deficiency of grave enthusiasm allows the self-love in the hinder parts of Mr

Jeffrey's head, to push forward his chin in a style that produces a puny sort of effect. Tom Moore has no want of enthusiasm, but it is not quite placid as it should be—or, at least, with him also the sinciput predominates in an irresistible degree. Now Scott and Byron are distinguished from all these by a fine secure swing of the head, as if they were prepared at all points. Lord Byron's head, however, is, I think, still more complete all throughout, than that of Mr Scott. The forehead is defective in much that Scott's possesses, but it is very fine upwards, and the top of the head is wonderfully capacious. The back part, in both of their heads, is manly and gallant-looking. Had they not been lame (by the way, what a singular coincidence that is!) I have no doubt they would both have been soldiers—and the world would have probably wanted Marmion and the Corsair. Lord Byron's head is, without doubt, the finest in our time—I think it is better, on the whole, than either Napoleon's, or Göethe's, or Canova's, or Wordsworth's. The chin, lips, and neck are beautiful—in the most noble style of antique beauty,—and the nose is not unworthy of keeping them in company—and yet that of Wordsworth is more perpendicular, and be-

longs still more strictly to the same class which the ancients, having exaggerated it into the ideal —attributed to Jupiter. It is better shaped in the ridge, than any nose of modern times I have seen; it comes down so straight from the forehead, that the eyes are thrown quite back into the head, as in the loftiest antique. Coleridge has a grand head, but very ill balanced, and the features of the face are coarse—although, to be sure, nothing can surpass the depth of meaning in his eyes, and the unutterable dreamy luxury in his lips. Thomas Campbell again, has a poor skull upwards, compared with what one might have looked for in him; but the lower part of the forehead is exquisite, and the features are extremely good, though tiny. They seem to me to be indicative of a most morbid degree of sensibility—the lips, in particular, are uncommonly delicate, and the eyes are wonderfully expressive of poetical habits of feeling. His brow speaks him to be born with a turn of composition truly lyrical, and perhaps he should not have cared to aim at other things. An uncommon perception of sweetness and refinement sits upon the whole of his physiognomy, but his face like his mind seems also to glow ever and anon with the greater fires of patriotism and public glory. He should

have been a patriotic lyrical poet, and his lays would not have failed to be sung,

> " Mid the festal city's blaze,
> When the wine-cup shines in light."

Indeed, why do I say he *should* have been? he *has* been, and *Hohenlinden*, and *Ye Mariners of England*, and *the Battle of the Baltic*, will never be forgotten as long as the British Jack is hoisted by the hands of freemen. I have already said something about the head of the author of the Isle of Palms—and that of the Ettrick Shepherd. They are both fine in their several ways. That of Wilson is full of the marks of genuine enthusiasm, and lower down of intense perception, and love of localities—which last feature, by the way, may perhaps account for his wild delight in rambling. I have heard that in his early youth, he proposed to go out to Africa, in quest of the Joliba, and was dissuaded only by the representations made to him on the subject of his remarkably fair and florid complexion—but I believe he has since walked over every hill and valley in the three kingdoms—having angling and versifying, no doubt, for his usual occupations, but finding room every now and then, by way of interlude, for astonishing the

fairs and wakes all over these islands, by his miraculous feats in leaping, wrestling, and single-stick. As for the Ettrick Shepherd, I am told that when Spurzheim was here, he never had his paws off him—and some cranioscopical young ladies of Edinburgh are said still to practise in the same way upon the good-humoured owner of so many fine bumps. I hear Mathews has borrowed for his "*At Home*," a saying which originally belongs to the Ettrick Shepherd. When Dr Spurzheim (or, as the Northern Reviewers very improperly christened him in the routs of Edinburgh, *Dousterswivel*),—when the Doctor first began to feel out the marks of genius in the cranium of the pastoral poet, it was with some little difficulty that Mr Hogg could be made to understand the drift of his curiosity. After hearing the Doctor's own story—"My dear fellow," quoth the Shepherd, "if a few knots and swells make a skull of genius, I've seen mony a saft chield get a swapping organization in five minutes at Selkirk tryst."

Since I have found my way once more into the subject of Craniology, I may as well tell you that I totally disagree with you, in regard to your remarks upon my notion of the Farnese

Hercules. I do not think your eye has been sufficiently trained in the inspection of living skulls; you must not venture as yet upon the antique, in which there is always some allowance to be made for the proper and necessary exaggerations of artists, that knew well enough what was right, but knew also that things should be broadly told, which are meant for the distant eye. The Theseus is another statue of a hero of somewhat the same kind, and, on looking into these things more leisurely, I am inclined to think you will find in it also confirmation of all that I said. In this town, there is at the Drawing Academy, a cast of this Elgin Marble, which I saw only yesterday, and I am never weary of seeing any copy, however faint, of that glorious original. The most remarkable thing about the organization of the Theseus, however, is, that the front part of the head is higher than the back part, which is a circumstance that very seldom occurs in Nature. I am not sure whether the form, even of this part of the Theseus, has not been defaced by the weather, and I think that in the cast there is some look of a joining, as if the upper hemisphere of the head had been found separate, and afterwards united to the statue. This is a profound and delicate question, and, as

I pass through London, I shall certainly endeavour to have a committee of craniologists summoned together to enquire into the fact—as one upon which the most important conclusions may depend. My own poor opinion is, that the sculptor probably did make the front part of the head higher than, or, at least, equally high with, the back parts. In most human heads, the point of will is the highest part—and from thence there is a slope more or less coming down to the forehead. In the Apollo Belvidere the slope is not much, and the line which it describes is convex and swelling. Now, in the Hercules Farnese, making allowance for the irregularities of the hair, there is no slope, but a level. If you look down on the top of the head of the Hercules, you will find it a very long one. The forehead is far pushed out—the middle is large—and the animal faculties are copious. The head of the Apollo, on the contrary, is far from being long in the same proportion—and it is singular how little the forehead is expanded, when considered in relation to the rest of the head. But I think the ancients had a notion that a small forehead expresses youth.

But the animal faculties, even of the Hercules himself, are quite Lilliputian compared with

those of a late hotel-keeper in this town, of whom a bust was taken after his death, by particular request of my friend Wastle. This fellow's head (his name was Macculloch) is shaped exactly like a jelly-bag, the animal propensities, below and behind, having apparently drawn down to them the whole of the juices, from which his organization above ought to have been supplied. His ears can scarcely be seen for the masses of luxurious prominence among which they are buried, and no mad bull was ever thicker just above the nape of the neck. I think it is much to be regretted, that such a person should have died in the prime of life—he must have been a fine living symbol of the Epicureanism—not of the garden—but of the kitchen and the cellar. His forehead is low and retreating, his nose short, and snubbed up at the end—the nostrils purfled and swelled out as they were not the receptacles of air, but apertures made expressly for blowing out the fumes of wine—perhaps tobacco—and his throat looks as if it were never intended to be otherwise than gorged with good cheer. Altogether he bears considerable resemblance to some of the fine old toping satyrs I have seen on antique vases. I am told this man was of great use to Edinburgh, by introducing many most

striking improvements in all departments of the profession wherein Nature had fitted him so eminently to excel. There was no such thing as a dinner well set down in a Northern tavern, till this great genius's jelly-bag head was set to work, and now I confess the North appears to me to be in all these respects treading fast on the kibes of the South. I think there is no question, the tavern-keepers of Scotland ought to canonize Macculloch as their patron saint, and put up his effigy over their doors, as time out of mind the tobacconists have placed over theirs that of the celebrated Negro, who smoked in one day the weight of his own body in segars.

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P. M.

LETTER LV.

TO THE SAME.

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I KNOW not how many days I might have lingered in the delightful society of Abbotsford, had it not been that I had promised Wastle to be back in Edinburgh by a particular day at dinner, and I was the less willing to break my engagement, as I understood Mr Scott was to come to town in the course of a week, so that I should not be compelled to take my final leave of him at his own seat. I quitted, however, with not a little reluctance, the immediate scene of so much pleasure—and the land of so many noble recollections. The morning, too, on which I de-

parted, was cold and misty; the vapours seemed unwilling to melt about the hill-tops; and I forded the darkened waters of the Tweed in assuredly a very pensive mood. Muffled in my cloak above the ears, I witnessed rather than directed the motions of the shandrydan, and arrived in Auld Reekie, after a ride of more than thirty miles, almost without having escaped, for a single second, from the same cloud of reverie in which I had begun the journey.

The character of the eminent man whom I had been seeing, and the influence which his writings have produced upon his country, were, as might be supposed, the main ingredients of all my meditation. After having conversed with Mr Scott, and so become familiar with the features of his countenance, and the tones of his voice, it seemed to me as if I had been furnished with a new key to the whole purpose of his intellectual labours, and was, for the first time, in a situation to look at the life and genius of the man with an eye of knowledge. It is wonderful how the mere seeing of such a person gives concentration, and compactness, and distinctness to one's ideas on all subjects connected with him; I speak for myself—to my mind, one of the best

commentaries upon the meaning of any author, is a good image of his face—and, of course, the reality is far more precious than any image can be.

You have often told me that Walter Scott has been excelled by several other poets of his time, in regularity and beauty of composition; and so far I have agreed, and do still agree with you. But I think there can be no doubt, that, far more than any other poet, or any other author of his time, he is entitled to claim credit for the extent and importance of the class of ideas to which he has drawn the public attention; and if it be so, what small matters all his deficiencies or irregularities are, when put in the balance against such praise as this. At a time when the literature of Scotland—and of England too—was becoming every day more and more destitute of command over everything but the mere speculative understanding of men—this great genius seems to have been raised up to counteract, in the wisest and best of all ways, this unfortunate tendency of his age, by re-awakening the sympathies of his countrymen for the more energetic characters and passions of their forefathers. In so doing he employed, indeed, with the skill

and power of a true master, and a true philopher, what constitutes the only effectual means of neutralising that barren spirit of lethargy into which the progress of civilization is in all countries so apt to lull the feelings and imaginations of mankind. The period during which most of his works were produced, was one of mighty struggles and commotions throughout all Europe, and the experience of that eventful period is sufficient to prove, that the greatest political anxieties, and the most important international struggles, can exert little awakening influence upon the character and genius of a people, if the private life of its citizens at home remains limited and monotonous, and confines their personal experience and the range of their thoughts. The rational matter-of-fact way in which all great public concerns are now-a-days carried forward, is sufficient to throw a damp upon the most stirring imagination. Wars are begun and concluded more in reliance upon the strength of money, than on the strength of minds and of men—votes, and supplies, and estimates, and regular business-like dispatches, and daily papers, take away among them the greater part of that magnificent indistinctness, through which, in former times, the great games of warfare and statesmanship used

alike to be regarded by those whose interests were at stake. Very little room is left for enthusiasm, when people are perpetually perplexed in their contemplations of great actions and great men, by the congratulating pettinesses of the well disposed on one side, and the carping meannesses of the envious, and the malevolent, and the little-minded, on the other. The circle within which men's thoughts move, becomes every day a narrower one—and they learn to travel to all their conclusions, not over the free and generous ranges of principle and feeling, but along the plain, hard, dusty high-way of calculation. Now, a poet like Walter Scott, by enquiring into and representing the modes of life in earlier times, employs the imagination of his countrymen, as a means of making them go through the personal experience of their ancestry, and of making them acquainted with the various courses of thought and emotion, by which their forefathers had their genius and characters drawn out—things to which, by the mechanical arrangements of modern life and society, we have been rendered too much strangers. Other poets, such as Byron, have attempted an analogous operation, by carrying us into foreign countries, where society is still comparatively young—but their

Mr. SCOTT.

method is by no means so happy or so complete as Scott's, because the people among whom they seek to interest us, have national characters totally different from our own—whereas those whose minds he exhibits as a stimulus to ours, are felt at once to be great kindred originals, of which our every-day experience shows us copies, faint indeed, but capable of being worked into stronger resemblance. If other poets should afterwards seek and collect their materials from the same field, they may perhaps be able to produce more finished compositions, but the honour of being the Patriarch of the National Poetry of Scotland, must always remain in the possession of Walter Scott. Nay, whatever direction the genius of his countrymen may take in future years, the benefit of his writings must ever be experienced in the great resuscitation of slumbering elements, which they have produced in the national mind. Perhaps the two earliest of his poems, the Lay of the Last Minstrel and Marmion, are the most valuable, because they are the most impregnated with the peculiar spirit of Scottish antiquity. In his subsequent poems, he made too much use of the common materials and machinery employed in the popular novels of

that day, and descended so far as to hinge too much of their interest upon the common resources of an artfully constructed fable. In like manner, in those prose Tales—which I no more doubt to be his than the poems he has published with his name—in that delightful series of works, which have proved their author to be the nearest kinsman the creative intellect of Shakespeare has ever had—the best are those, the interest of which is most directly and historically national—Waverley and Old Mortality. The whole will go down together, so long as any national character survives in Scotland—and themselves will, I nothing question, prolong the existence of national character there more effectually, than any other stimulus its waning strength is ever likely to meet with. But I think the two I have mentioned, will always be considered as the brightest jewels in this ample crown of unquenched and unquenchable radiance. What Shakespeare has done for the civil wars of the two Roses, and the manifestations of national mind produced by the influence of the old baronial feuds—what the more than dramatic Clarendon has done for the great period of contest between the two majestic sets of principles, up-

on whose union, matured and tempered, the modern constitution of England is founded—the same service has been rendered by the author of these Tales (whosoever he may be), to the most interesting times in the history of the national mind of Scotland—the times, when all the various elements of her character, religious and political, were exhibited in their most lively fermentation of sharpness and vigour. As for the complaints which have been made of unfairness and partiality, in the views which he has given of the various parties—I think they are not only exaggerated, but altogether absurd. It is, indeed, very easy to see to which side the Poet's own early prejudices have given his mind a leaning—but I think it is no less easy to see that the romance of his predilections has been tempered and chastened by as fine a mixture of sober reflection and generous candour, as ever entered into the composition of any man of high and enthusiastic feeling. There is too much chivalry about the man, to allow of his treating his *foes* unfairly; and had he been really disposed to injure any set of men, he had weapons enough at his disposal, very different from any which even his detractors can accuse him of having employ-

ed. But enough of such fooleries; they are only fit for those who have uttered them—a set of persons, by the way, who might have been expected to bear a little innocent ridicule with a little more Christian equanimity, after so ample experience of the "*Cachinno monstrarier.*"

Altogether, it must be allowed that the situation of Scotland, as to literature, is a very peculiar one. No large crop of indigenous literature sprung out of its own feelings at the time when the kindred spirit of England was in that way so prolific. The poets it produced in the former times were almost all emigrants, and took up the common stock of ideas that were floating in England;—or at least their works, like those of Thomson, had no relation to their own country in particular, or its modes of feeling. It is a difficult question how two countries, standing in the relation of England and Scotland, should manage with their respective talents and histories. It cannot be doubted that there is a very considerable difference in their national genius—and indeed, the Scots seem to resemble the English much more in their power of thought than in their turn of character. Their first remarkable exhibition of talent was entirely in the line of thought—Hume—Smith, and the rest of that

school are examples. The Scots dialect never having been a written language, at least to any important extent, and there being no literary monuments belonging exclusively to Scotland, of course the associations of the literary men were formed on English models and on English works. Now, after two nations have been long separate in their interests, and have respectively nourished their own turn of thinking—they may at last come to be united in their interests, but their associations cannot be so pliable, nor can they be so easily amalgamated. An union of national interests *quoad* external power relates chiefly to the future—whereas, associations respect the past. And here was an unfortunate circumstance of separation between the Scots literati and the mass of the Scottish people.—The essence of all nationality, however, is a peculiar way of thinking, and conceiving, which may be applied to subjects not belonging to the history of one's own country, although it certainly is always most in place when exhibited in conjunction with the scenery and accompaniments of Home. In Scotland, there are many things that must conspire to wean men from the past—the disuse of their old dialect—the unpleasant nature of some of the events that have befallen

them—the neighbourhood of triumphant and eclipsing England, which, like an immense magnet, absolutely draws the needles from the smaller ones—the Reformation, above all, which, among them, was conducted in a way peculiarly unfortunate, causing all the old religious associations to be considered as detestable and sinful; and gradually sinking into oblivion a great many ancient ideas of another class, which were entwined with these, and which were shaken off also as a matter of necessity, *ne pars sincera trahatur.*

Puritanism, by its excessive exclusiveness, always brings along with it a nakedness and barrenness of mind in relation to all human attachments, and the temporal concerns of life. But human nature, in despite of Puritanism, can never be utterly extinguished. It still demands some human things for our affections to lean upon—some thoughts to be dear to our imaginations, and which we may join our countrymen in loving—for common attachments widely diffused, must always tend to civilize and improve human nature, and awaken generous and social habits of feeling. Shakespeare observes in Coriolanus, that, during the time of war, citizens always feel more benevolent towards each other; and the reason, no doubt is, that war reminds

them in what respects their interests and feelings concur. Puritanism weighs too hard upon human nature, and does not tend to draw out its best aspect. It makes every man too much the arbiter of his opinions and their champion—hence too much self-love. It makes him look with too much jealousy and anxiety upon his neighbours, as persons in error, or capable of leading him into error—or as differing in their convictions from those at which he himself has had the happiness to arrive. Hence a want of cheerfulness, confidence, and settled good nature.—Lastly, Puritanism leaves a man alone to face and fight the devil upon the strength of his own virtue and judgment, which, I dare say, Colonel Harrison himself would feel to be as much as he was able for. Puritans confine their imaginations entirely to the Scriptures, and cut themselves off from the early Romish legends of saints—the true mythology of Christianity—the only part of it, at least, which poetry and the other fine arts can, without too great a breach of reverence, mould and adapt to their own purposes. Some of them surely are exquisite in beauty, and afford room for all manner of play of fancy. I speak, you will remember, entirely with an eye to lite-

rature. Whatever may be the orthodox opinions on these subjects, why should poetry refuse to invest them with preternatural attributes, or to take advantage of the fine poetical situations which sometimes occur in those old histories?

Again, although the history of Scotland has not been throughout filled with splendid or remarkable events, fitted to show off the national character in the most luminous and imposing points of view, yet few persons will refuse to consider the Scots as a nation remarkable—most remarkable—for natural endowments. It would be difficult to say in what elements adapted to make a nation shine in literature they are at all deficient. Now, when the character of a nation has once fully developed itself in events or in literature, its posterity are too apt to consider its former achievements or writings as an adequate expression or symbol of what exists in themselves, and so to remain contented without making any farther exertions—and this, I take it, is one of the main causes of what appears externally in the history of nations, to be barrenness, degeneracy, and exhaustion of intellectual power; —so that it may perhaps be one of the advantages which Scotland possesses over England and many

other countries, that she has not yet created any sufficient monuments of that "mightiness for good or ill" that is within her.

If a remainder of her true harvest is yet to be reaped—if any considerable body of her yet unexpended force is now to make its appearance in literature, it will do so under the most favourable circumstances, and with all appliances to boot, which the present state of intellectual cultivation in Europe can furnish, both in the way of experience, and as objects for examination and reflection. The folly of slighting and concealing what remains concealed within herself, is one of the worst and most pernicious that can beset a country, in the situation wherein Scotland stands. Although, perhaps, it is not now the cue of Scotland to dwell very much on her own past history, (which that of England has thrown too much into the shade,) yet she should observe what fine things have been made even of this department, by the great genius of whom I have spoken above—and learn to consider her own national *character* as a mine of intellectual wealth, which remains in a great measure unexplored. While she looks back upon the history of England, as upon that of the country to which she

has suspended and rendered subordinate her fortunes, yet she should by no means regard English *literature*, as an expression of her mind, or as superseding the examination of what intellectual resources remain unemployed within her own domains of peculiar possession.

The most remarkable literary characters which Scotland produced last century, showed merely (as I have already said) the force of her intellect, as applied to matters of reasoning. The generation of Hume, Smith, &c., left matters of feeling very much unexplored, and probably considered Poetry merely as an elegant and tasteful appendage to the other branches of literature, with which they themselves were more conversant. Their disquisitions on morals were meant to be the vehicles of ingenious theories—not of convictions of sentiment. They employed, therefore, even in them, only the national intellect, and not the national modes of feeling.

The Scottish literati of the present day have inherited the ideas of these men, and acted upon them in a great measure—with scarcely more than the one splendid exception of Walter Scott. While all the rest were contenting themselves with exercising and displaying their speculative acuteness, this man had the wisdom—whether

by the impulse of Nature, or from reflection, I know not—to grapple boldly with the feelings of his countrymen. The habits of self-love, so much pampered and indulged by the other style, must have opposed some resistance to the influence of works such as his—I mean their more solid, and serious, and abiding influence upon the characters and minds of those who read them; but these are only wreaths of snow, whose cold flakes are made to be melted when the sun shines fairly upon them. His works are altogether the most remarkable phenomenon in this age of wonders—produced among a people, whose taste had been well nigh weaned from all those ranges of feeling, on which their main inspiration and main power depend—they have of themselves been sufficient to create a more than passionate return of faith and homage to those deserted elements of greatness, in all the better part of his countrymen. I consider him, and his countrymen should do so, as having been the sole saviour of all the richer and warmer spirit of literature in Scotland. He is, indeed, the *Facillime Princeps* of all her poets, past and present, and I more than question the likelihood of his having hereafter any "Brother near the throne."

I should like to see a really fine portrait of Mr Scott, representing him in his library—or rather in his armoury at Abbotsford, musing, within sight of the silver Tweed, upon some grand evocation of the national genius of his country. By the way, I should have told you what a fine picturesque place this armoury is—how its roof is loaded with fac-similes of the best decorations of Melrose—how its windows glow with the rich achievements of all the old families of Border renown—how its walls are covered with hauberks, jacks, actons, bills, brands, claymores, targets, and every weapon of foray warfare. But I must not come back to my descriptions.

P. M.

P. S. If any of my remarks appear short and ill-tempered, be pleased to remember that they have been written under all the irritation of a foot swelling and reddening every hour into more decided *Podagra*. I feel that I am fairly in for a fit. I have at least a week of my sofa before me—so, instead of claret, and the writing of wordy epistles, I must e'en do the best I can with a sip of water-gruel, and the old luxury of conning over Burton's Anatomy of

Melancholy. Once more adieu!—"A stout heart to a stiff brae," as we say in Scotland; which, being interpreted, signifies

"Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito."

P. M.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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